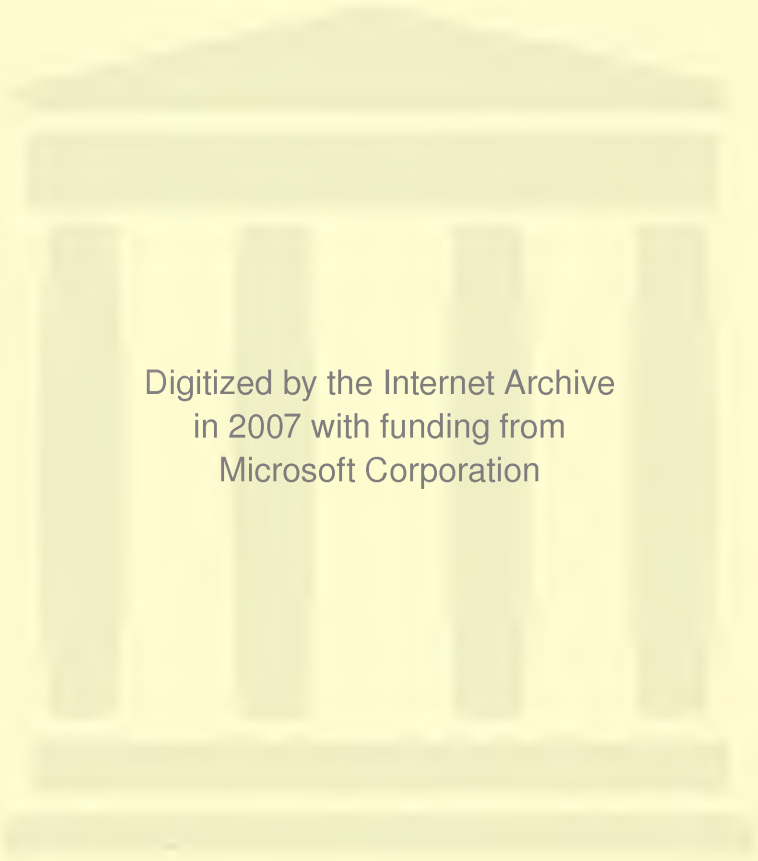
# PAUL VERLAINE

## *His Absinthe Tinted Song*

*Bergen Applegate*



PAUL VERLAINE

*His Absinthe-Tinted Song*

*"La beauté de l'œuvre rachète la difformité de l'ouvrier."*

*Catulle Mendès.*

# PAUL VERLAINE

## His Absinthe-Tinted Song

*A Monograph on the Poet, with selections from his work, arranged and translated from the French by*

**BERGEN APPLEGATE**

RALPH FLETCHER SEYMOUR
THE ALDERBRINK PRESS
CHICAGO

TO THE MEMORY
OF ONE LONG SINCE ASLEEP
AND YET WHO LIVING LOVED THE POETS' SONGS
JUDGE JONATHAN C. APPLEGATE
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED WITH LOVE
AND REVERENCE
BY HIS SON

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*The four photogravures are from paintings by Edmund Dulac, and are used through the courtesy of L'Illustration, Paris.*

PAUL VERLAINE


PAVL
VERLAINE

# PAUL VERLAINE

## I

### The Man

WANDERING from lupanar to lupanar, and from wine-shop to wine-shop, he seems to have staggered out of the pages of Petronius—some vague, indefinite creature, half beast and half man—a veritable satyr—and who, in the glitter of modern Paris, fared as fatuitously as in a fable.

Indeed, well might he be likened to the mythical old Eumpolus, the drunken brawling poet of the Satyricon, reappearing after so many centuries, with a fresh stock of mock-heroic verses and amplifying in some dingy café of the Quartier Latin, his tale of the Ephesian matron.

His life from early youth appears to have followed the course of a Rake's Progress, as though, during adolescence, he had chosen Hogarth's hero for model. And to what depths this primrose path finally led him —to a felon's cell, an exile's garret, and the pauper's bed of death.

Let us look at this singular genius in one of his favorite haunts. It is the year 1893. A basement café, Place St. Michel, Paris. The air is fetid with tobacco smoke, mixed with the pungent, acrid odor of absinthe. It is two o'clock in the morning. Some Parisian night birds, *souteneurs, filles de joie,* and the like, have dropped in to moisten their gullets and look for prey. At a table in the center of the room a group of young

men are sipping *bocks* and *petits verres* and listening to the *rabelaisien* ejaculations of a drunken man who looks to be sixty-five years old but who, in reality, is not yet fifty. The drunkard is Verlaine—the listeners some of his self-styled disciples. But the master?

"A face," to use the words of Jules Huret, "like that of a wicked angel grown old, with a thin untrimmed beard and abrupt nose; his bushy, bristling eyebrows resembling bearded wheat, hiding deep set green eyes; his wholly bald and huge long skull, misshapen by enigmatic bumps—all these give to his physiognomy a contradictory appearance of stubborn asceticism and cyclopean appetites." He is dressed in a cheap ill-fitting suit of gray, evidently of English make. His cane and a greasy hat are lying beside him. His linen, if such it may be called, appears to have been resurrected by a ragpicker—a *chiffonnier* of the Quartier—and sold to some ambulatory Hebrew vendor who in turn passed it on to Verlaine for a few *sous*.

He is drinking absinthe. The wan, purplish light shed by the gas jets from the walls, mingled with the more ruddy glow from a large oil lamp hanging above the group, throws into his glass some rays of iridescent splendor. Half curiously, half questioningly his sunken, glowing eyes peer into the greenish opalescent liquid. The look is that of a man not altogether certain of his identity—the fixed gaze of a somnambulist taking on a puzzled expression at the moment of awakening. Well might he question, for into that devil's chalice he had poured all his youth, all his fortune, all his talent, all his happiness, all his life.

The group had been discussing literature earlier in the night, as always. Poets had been dragged by their feet, so to speak, tossed in imaginary blankets or exalted beyond the gods. Then the hated *bourgeois* were driven into the arena where they were martyred, individually and in groups, with all the ingenuity of a

band of Bohemians—or Apaches. The night wearing, they had turned to that subject with which men frequently (if not habitually) regale their empty cups and stimulate senses already jaded by drink—to the subject of sex. And the master, with a nonchalance altogether Gallic, was giving vent to obscenities that would have made blush a haberdasher's manikin.

In such a manner were Verlaine's evenings usually spent at this period. It was about this time that Edmund Gosse, the English writer, met the poet. "I was looking," says he in French Profiles, "for that vaster lepidopter, that giant hawkmoth, Paul Verlaine . . . who uncoiled his proboscus in the same absinthe corollas," as other of the butterfly creatures of tinkling rhyme. It was late at night when, with a party of friends, the poet had been sought in vain at his familiar haunts. Suddenly the word was passed that he had been seen at the *Café Soleil d'Or*. No Verlaine. But "where I sat, by the elbow of Moreas," says Gosse: "I was opposite an open door, absolutely dark, leading down by oblique stairs, to a cellar. As I idly watched this square of blackness, I suddenly saw some ghostly shape fluttering at the bottom of it. It took the form of a strange bald head, bobbing close to the ground. Although it was so dim and vague, an idea crossed my mind. Not daring to speak, I touched Moreas, and so drew his attention to it. *"Pas un mot, pas un geste, Monsieur!"* he whispered, and then, instructed in the guile of his race, *insidias Danaûm,* the eminent author of *Les Cantilènes* rose, making a vague detour toward the street, and then plunged at the cellar door. There was a prolonged scuffle and a rolling down stairs; then Moreas reappeared triumphant; behind him something flopped up out of the darkness like an owl,—a timid, shambling figure in a soft black hat, with jerking hands, and it peeped with the intention to disappear again."

Sherard, another English writer, thus describes the glimpse he had of Verlaine as follows: "My first sight of this great, simple, beautiful poet and child was in the basement of a café . . . where there used to be singing, and where the poets gathered. Verlaine was drunk that night and as usual was dressed in rags. He had a false nose on his face (for it was carnival time) and he was piping on a little tin whistle. The spectacle had the terrible comedy touch of Aristophanes. It was tragedy made grotesque. The man had the head and face of Socrates, and here we saw Socrates playing the buffoon."

Such was the appearance of Paul Verlaine at the period of his greatest renown. A singular character indeed, but in every respect conforming to the accepted idea of a true poet—the cicada of life's short summer, with no thought for the future or care of the present, piping his haunting melodies on the warm air and falling dead at the roadside before the first frost. *Pauvre Lelain!*

To write of Verlaine, the man, one must first call to aid those men of science whose vocation is that of dealing with pathological subjects. These savants experience no difficulty in placing such a character in the proper category.

Even a pseudo-scientist, one such as Max Nordau, might be permitted to give expert (?) testimony. Let us examine the prisoner (or poet!) on trial for his reputation:

The Prosecutor: "Dr. Nordau, what in your opinion, is the mental responsibility of the subject now on trial?"

Mein Herr, Dr. Max Nordau: "He is suffering from dementia—he is a paroxysmal dipsomaniac. Moral insanity, however, is not present. The subject sins through irresistible impulse. He is an Impulsivist."

The Prosecutor: "Are there any other phases of this malady?"

Mein Herr, Dr. Max Nordau: "Yes, morbid intensified eroticism. The subject is what scientific men call a *circulaire,* that is, he is a victim of that form of mental disease in which states of excitement and depression follow each other in regular succession. *Circulaires* are condemned by the very nature of their affliction to be vagabonds and thieves. Verlaine has been a vagabond all his life."

The Prosecutor: "Are there other symptoms of this mental malady?"

Mein Herr, Dr. Max Nordau: "Many. Most of Verlaine's poetry is mere *grimoire.* His language is often that of babes. He can not properly connect an adjective with a noun to save his life."

Further testimony on the part of the witness, Dr. Nordau, elicits the fact that there *are* some poems in Verlaine's répertoire that are, after all, really Kosher. For instance, there is that little song of only fifty words. It is called *Chanson d'Automne.* Merely a gust of October air sharpened in the gathering shadows of early twilight and blowing through the scant brown foliage of a forest tree. But the sigh!—

*"Les sanglots longs*
*Des violons*
*De l'automne*
*Blessent mon cœur*
*D'une langueur*
*Monotone."*

Is there anything in literature to rival it? Is it not worth many pages of so-called scientific writing? Dr. Nordau confesses: "Even if literally translated there remains something of the melancholy magic of the lines, which in French are so rhythmical and full of

music." Then there is the poem in *La Bonne Chanson* beginning:

*"Avant que tu ne t'en ailles,"*

and that other world known poem in *Romances Sans Paroles,* the first stanza of which,

*"Il pleure dans mon cœur*
*Comme il pleut sur la ville.*
*Quelle est cette langueur*
*Qui pénètre mon cœur?"*

has wept in so many, many hearts. Well may Dr. Max pause in his senseless tirade against Décadents to proclaim these poems the faultless pearls among French lyrics.

But as to Nordau's characterization of Verlaine, all had been said, and better, by Lombroso, from whose book "The Man of Genius" Nordau filched without stint. As to Verlaine, one can not discover a poet with a surgeon's scalpel or the chart of a neurologist.

It is unnecessary to endeavor to justify Verlaine's faults of character. Indeed, he makes no effort to excuse himself. On the contrary, he is continually debasing himself, but the psychological reason is not far to seek, for it has its origin in a kind of Mosochism.

Drink was Verlaine's besetting sin. This habit he formed early in life. Writing of drunkenness in his *Confessions,* he says: "This absinthe! What horror, when I think of those days (his early manhood) . . . and of time not so remote . . . I repeat in all shame I shall have later to tell of many absurdities (and worse) due to the abuse of this horrible drink; this abuse itself, source of folly and of crime, of idiocies and of shame. The governments should suppress this absinthe—and why not?"

Truly his life was steeped in *l'herbe sainte.* During his latter days (save when in some hospital) he seldom drew a sober breath. The deep melancholy, the sad languors, the frightful *ennui,* the stormy scenes with friends or with his numerous mistresses, all these were due to drink. The estrangement with his wife, his vagabond wanderings with Arthur Rimbaud and his subsequent imprisonment at Mons were due to the same cause.

When sober the poet was kindly, tractable and good natured and had the faculty of making friends who sympathized with his unfortunate temperament. One of them, Edmond Lepelletier, a brave and good man, who was later to become his biographer, has done much to dispel the evil report that had its rise at the time the poet was divorced from his wife, and which clung to him through life.

Writing of this in his biography of the poet, Lepelletier says: "A legend grew up around him; all the more persistent and enduring from the fact that Verlaine himself was largely its author, and dug the grave of his own reputation. His disciples widely disseminated the gospel of depravity it amused him to preach."

Elsewhere in this biography is found this passage: "What decided him (to leave Rethel, where he was professor) was, perhaps, one of his impulses—strange, powerful, and much misunderstood—toward friendship. I have already alluded to the strength of the attachment he conceived for various comrades: one of his Dujardin cousins, Lucien Viotti and Arthur Rimbaud . . . Lucien Létinois, another of his attachments, was the son of a farmer, born at Coulommes, in the Ardennes. He was a tall, pale, slim, awkward youth, with a melancholy and simple air . . . the shepherd in a comic opera." Upon the death of this youth, Verlaine, "not being able," as writes Lepelletier, "like the Emperor Hadrian to erect a mausoleum in stone to this

Ardennoise Antinous, he constructed *Amour,* a lyrical monument apparently indestructible."

It is curious to note that Mdlle. Mathilde Mauté, Verlaine's *fiancée,* who in 1870 could prattle to her lover, *"J'ai demandé hier à maman comment on avait des enfants et elle m'a répondu que c'était quand on baisait un homme sur la bouche,"* would in a few short months calmly announce to the world, *"que les sentiments de son mari pour ce privilégié* (Rimbaud) *des Muses se muaient en une affection . . . trop vive!"*

Arthur Rimbaud was a powerful factor in the downfall of Verlaine. A rascal, not without talent, he led the weak-willed poet from his home in Paris to a vagabond life in Belgium and England. Then, having completed his ruin, he succeeded in landing his erstwhile friend in prison and disappeared from Europe, later to reappear in the spectacular rôle of slave driver and trader in Northern Africa.

Verlaine never ceased to regret his wife, who was divorced from him in 1874. In his volume of prose, entitled *Mémoires d'un Veuf,* he writes of her as follows: "She was *petite*—small, with a fear of *embonpoint;* her toilet was almost simple, coquettish in a way, but very slightly so. I remember her always as dressed in gray or green—a tender green and somber gray, because of the indecisive color of her hair—which appeared to be of a luminous chestnut tint, and of her eyes of which one could hardly decide or even guess the color. She was good hearted, but truly vindictive and given to irredeemable hatreds. Her hands were little, and her forehead rather small, upon which a kiss was only to be lightly pressed to pass to other things. The blue flower of the veins about her temples was easily swollen by anger—not hasty, but premeditated—but for causes, which, after all, were pardonable. In sum, she was a wife worthy of any man, and although tempestuous at times, like the sea, like it she could be calm and gentle and altogether lovable."

Such was the heroine of *La Bonne Chanson,* a work which Lepelletier calls a stanza taken from the eternal poem of youthful love. Some years after her divorce Madame Verlaine married and became the mother of an interesting family. According to Frank Harris, in his Contemporary Portraits, she was alive in 1915 and about to publish her Memoirs.

Aside from the period of his infancy Verlaine was sober—for a time. This was an enforced sobriety of two years in jail. From the prison at Mons also dates what he was pleased to call his religious conversion. There be those who profess to find in the volume of *Sagesse,* begun about this period, "the most truly beautiful and Christian poems of all time." Granted, they may be Christian, but from another point of view *Sagesse* is the most puerile of all his works. Verlaine was incapable, mentally, of attaining, even approximately, the Christian ideal. Repentant (being sober and in prison) no doubt he was, but Christian, never.

*Sagesse,* however, serves by way of contrast to bring into bolder relief the strange, erotic work *Parallèlement,* whose verses appear to have been written alternately with those of *Sagesse.*

Apropos to this, Donos in his *Verlaine Intime* writes: "To the magic lantern of the Devil, Verlaine *en train* to compose *Sagesse* is obsessed with the lubrique vision of a certain chamber in Paris where his affectionate Rimbaud offered him one night a singular hospitality." And the poet turns from "My God to me has said," to compose:

*"O chambre, as-tu gardé les spectres ridicules,*
*O plein de jour sale et de bruits d'araignées?"*

Neither in *Sagesse* nor *Parallèlement* is Verlaine immortal.

Paul Verlaine has erroneously been likened to a number of other writers. On the side of his character he

has been compared with Villon and Poe. There are points of resemblance to each. But as a writer he is unique, and comparison fails. Of northern French ancestry, he had a penchant for the North—for Belgium and England. He learned English and read Shakespeare. He even wrote some sober, dignified prose articles for certain English magazines, his style conforming with the solidity and gravity of these reviews.

During the last years of his life, Verlaine furnished much good natured amusement for *tout Paris.* But these were years of misery and suffering for the poet, reduced to pauperism by his dissipated habits and impractical temperament. In proportion, however, as his misery and illness were augmented, his fame grew. "Verlaine is back to the hospital," printed as a news item in the daily press, was the signal for a fresh batch of anecdotes concerning his strange career.

Edgar Saltus writing of the poet says: "After his discharge from prison, I had the signal honor of meeting him, and I can see him now, Socrates and Anacreon in one, hiccoughing down the laurel lanes, paying with enigmatic songs the food which young poets provided, distilling a mysterious music from the absinthe offered by them, and presenting at last a spectacle unique in literature, that of a singer applauded in a charity bed and rising from it to become one of the glories of France—though not of the French Academy."

It was George Moore who first brought Verlaine to the notice of the English public. Moore's visit to the poet and related in his book Impressions and Opinions is illuminating: "In a dark corner, at the end of a narrow passage situated at the top of the last flight of stairs, we discovered a door. We knocked. A voice made itself heard. We entered and saw Verlaine. The terrible forehead, bald and prominent, was half covered by a filthy nightcap, and a night shirt full of the grease of the bed covered his shoulders; a stained

and discolored pair of trousers was hitched up somehow about his waist. He was drinking wine at sixteen *sous* the litre. He told us that he had just come out of the hospital; that his leg was better, but it still gave him a great deal of pain. He pointed to it. We looked away."

The poet's tempestuous liaisons with various women during his latter days serve to strengthen the conclusion of Lombroso that genius is a degenerative psychosis of the epileptoid order. These women were beings of the commonest clay, most of them from the underworld. They alternately beat, robbed and betrayed him. Yet one of them wiped the moisture of death from his forehead, and another wept at his tomb when all others had gone.

The poet's will, written in bitter jest, is a document to muse upon. It is the epitome of a misspent life:

MY WILL

I give nothing to the poor, because I am poor myself.
I believe in God.

Paul Verlaine.

Codicil.—As regards my obsequies, I desire to be conducted to the place of final repose in a Lesage cart (dust cart) and that my remains be deposited in the crypt of the Odeon.

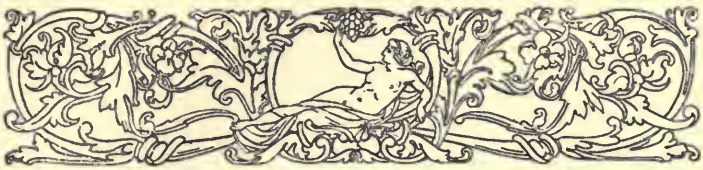
As my fame has never prevented any one from sleeping, the choirs can sing, during the sad ceremony, to an air of Gossec's, the celebrated ode *"La France a perdus son Morphée."*

Made in Paris, June, 1885.

Verlaine never learned that the senses can only be exhausted, not satisfied. But in this he was not alone. It is thus with many men of genius. Their moral sight seems blinded by the rays of that superintelligence with

which the god of Chance has endowed them, and they fall to chasing the butterflies of passion, rather than giving heed to the more responsible duties of life. Like meteors out of the night of Time do such personalities appear to our astonished vision, and long after their astral bodies have flashed below the horizon do their lights persist.

And it is to them we owe so much—the perfect statue, the matchless painting, and the deathless song.



## II

### His Life

Paul Marie Verlaine was born at Metz, Lorraine, France, March 30, 1844. His father, Nicolas Auguste Verlaine, was born in Belgium and was forty-six years old at the poet's birth.

The poet's mother was born in Fampoux, (Pas De Calais) France. Her maiden name was Josèphe Stephanie Dehée. She was thirty-two years old when her son was born. Verlaine's father was Captain Adjutant-Major, Second Regiment of Engineers, in the French Army. He was *Chevalier* of the *Legion d'Honneur* and of the order of *Saint Ferdinand d'Espagne.*

In 1851 the Verlaines moved to Paris and bought property in the suburb, Les Batignolles, on the old rue Saint Louis.

In religion Mme. Verlaine was a devout Catholic, but her husband was indifferent to such matters. Paul was an only child and at an early age was sent to private school, rue Helene, and later to the Institute Landry, boarding school on the rue Chaptal, where he remained several years. At this Institute pupils were prepared by classes at the Lycée Bonaparte. In a class of fifty pupils, the future poet ranked neither first nor last. He was especially deficient in mathematics but notably good in rhetoric, literature, Latin and Greek. He took his Bachelor of Letters degree, and in an application for government position was highly recommended by his teacher.

Verlaine's parents intended him for the law, and after his school days he began the study of this profession, at the same time endeavoring to secure a position with the Government. Finding law distasteful, the future poet took (after some months training in a business college) a subordinate position in an insurance office. Through influence of his father's friends, he was appointed, some months later, as clerk in the municipal offices of the ninth arrondissement, and later was promoted to a clerkship in the Bureau of Budgets and Accounts. This was in 1864, and the poet was then twenty years old.

At this age he was already dissipated. In fact, his irregular habits dated almost from his entrance into the Lycée Bonaparte. He describes with singular *sang-froid,* in his *Confessions,* how, at the age when most children are still in knickerbockers, he lost his innocence in a vile *bagnio* on a side street in Paris.

Verlaine as a clerk in the Hotel-de-Ville was indolent, spending most of his time in a neighboring café in company with other municipal employes, a number of whom had literary aspirations. According to Lepelletier, few of these municipal clerks bothered their heads about work. Verlaine had written verses from his early school days, and profiting by the light duties of clerkship, he brought out at this time his first book, *Poèmes Saturniens.* This work, a thin volume of 163 pages, bore the imprint "Alphonse Lemerre, publisher, Paris; 47 Passage Choiseul, 1866."

Captain Verlaine having died in December, 1865, his widow continued to live at Les Batignolles with her son, upon whom she lavished every tenderness. Indeed, she spoiled him shamefully, indulged him in everything, and forgave all his youthful follies. The young clerk sowed a tremendous crop of wild oats—coming home drunk at all hours of the night. This lack of restraint

in his youth, coupled with a weak will and neurotic temperament, was the cause of his downfall.

In 1869, Verlaine, still at the Hotel-de-Ville, brought out, through the publisher Lemerre, a second volume of poems, the *Fêtes Galantes.*

These were the happiest days of the unfortunate man's life. He was twenty-five. The author of two volumes of poems which gave brilliant promise, secure and light employment, promising better things, he was one of a group of young writers who had already made a noise in the world of letters and who, under the name of *Parnassiens,* have left an indelible impression upon French literature.

He appears to have been popular with his friends. In fact, through his entire life he seems to have had the gift of friendship, and this, despite his eccentricities. His was a sort of saturnine gaiety—repulsive and pleasing by turns.

When Captain Verlaine died, he left his widow in modest but comfortable circumstances, and while the poet's salary as a clerk was small, he spent it entirely upon himself, and a little money in 1869, in Paris, went far, if one had Bohemian tastes.

The poet had already met Victor Hugo, and Sainte-Beuve had earnestly and conscientiously praised his *Poèmes Saturniens.* Barbey d'Aurevilly had also given him a slight stab of criticism. He knew intimately most of the literary people of Paris worth knowing. He was a welcomed guest at the homes of influential and worthy people. Although exceedingly ugly of face, he rather fascinated and stamped his individuality upon those who saw him for the first time. Usually careless in his costume, he now dressed better, and he was in love!

Life at times is very much like those fine old Swiss clocks that play a merry little tune and then strike the hour—solemnly.

The object of the poet's affection was Mdlle. Mathilde Mauté, half-sister to one of his friends, Charles de Sivry, and it was at the latter's home that he first met her in the spring of 1869. It seems to have been a case of love at first sight upon the part of both. Mdlle. Mauté was very young, almost a child, and she seems to have been singularly attractive, judging from what has been written about her. That she inspired one of the most beautiful of the poet's works, *La Bonne Chanson* (The Good Song), must ever resound to her credit. Unfortunate for her that her path should have crossed that of the unhappy man whom she was later to wed. Posterity will forgive her any faults committed in hours of sorrow. Verlaine as a husband was impossible.

Youth and love! The divine alchemy that transmutes the base metals of daily life into the pure gold of sentiment! The poet sang:

"Before thou takest flight
Pale star of dawn sublime,
—A thousand quail
Singing, singing in the thyme,—

Turn toward the poet,
Mark his eyes how full of love,
—The lark
Mounts to the sky above."

The courtship of the young couple was filled, alternately, with ecstasy and disappointment, and the date of the wedding was postponed twice. Verlaine gave up for the time his dissipated habits and became a dutiful son, if not an ideal lover. He continued to unburden his heart with the good song, and the spring of 1870 saw his hopes about to be realized. He raised his voice in that matchless lay of triumphant joy:

"Winter has gone: the balmy light indeed
Dances, from earth unto the heavens clear.
O, well may the heart the most sad accede
To the immense joy scattered in the air!"

The year 1870 was the Terrible Year for France. The country was filled with rumors of war. The date of the wedding had been set for the month of August, but before it took place hostilities had already begun. With what disaster and defeat! With MacMahon in full flight and the Prussians advancing on Paris, amid the noise of regiments defiling along the boulevards, the nuptials were celebrated at the church of Notre Dame de Cligmancourt. Among those present was Louise Michel, then a schoolmistress at Montmartre.

Of the poet at this time Lepelletier says: "He had hope and faith; marriage for him was a true sacrament, an initiation of the soul. He had never loved, never been loved before. It was the most wonderful moment in his life."

It was during the first year of his marriage that Verlaine published, through Lemerre, his third book of poems, *La Bonne Chanson*. "A flower in a bombshell," Victor Hugo called it.

While the Verlaines celebrated their honeymoon at No. 2 Rue du Cardinal-Lemoine, where they had begun housekeeping, Paris was invested and the Commune raged. Things were topsyturvy at the Hotel-de-Ville, and a cloud "bigger than a man's hand" had darkened their *foyer*—conjugal incompatibility! The poet deserted his clerical post (or rather failed to follow M. Thiers to Versailles) and shouldering a carbine mounted guard in defense of the city, in the 160th battalion of the Rapée-Bercy. This was during the winter, 1870-71.

The weather was desperately cold, and the citizen soldier, in consequence, developed a desperate thirst.

Before long, he began to go home drunk, some say to beat his wife. Howbeit, the roses of August had shed their petals, and the Prussian guns had driven the bluebird far away. The young wife fled also, going to the home of her parents. Thither the poet followed, and a temporary reconciliation took place. The poet went back to the Hotel-de-Ville in the spring, but during the summer took his wife to the country, returning in September. Through his neglect, notwithstanding that order had been restored in Paris, he lost his clerkship. For a time the couple lived with the wife's parents, where their son, Georges, was born, and where, one fatal day, the devil entered in the form of Arthur Rimbaud.

This singular genius was born at Charleville, France, in 1854, and at the time of his meeting with Verlaine was a lad of seventeen. He was precocious, and as a schoolboy had composed a number of bizarre poems. The *Poèmes Saturniens* having come to his notice, he wrote the author a flattering letter, and the impressionable Verlaine invited him to visit Paris. Paul and his wife were still living with the latter's parents, and the introduction of Rimbaud into their home was a fresh cause of discord.

Rimbaud proved himself a drunken visionary and scoundrel, and in July, 1872, the two friends decamped from Paris, going to Belgium where they led a vagabond existence. They also visited England, living in London for several months upon funds supplied by Verlaine's mother, eked out by a pittance earned from giving French lessons.

In June, 1873, Verlaine and Rimbaud were back in Belgium, where Paul's mother awaited him in Brussels. Lepelletier writes: "Verlaine's psychological state at this period was distressing, almost morbid. I have already said that he detested and adored his wife. Alternately he cried for her, longed for her, cursed and

overwhelmed her with reproaches and insults from afar."

Association with Rimbaud had ruined him morally and physically. A hopeless dipsomaniac, he was on the verge of delirium tremens. The two men quarreled in a room at the hotel de Courtrai, Brussels, in the presence of Verlaine's mother. The poet, forthwith, drew a pistol and fired two shots at Rimbaud, intent on killing the man whose baneful influence had aided so much in completing his downfall. Save a slight wound in the wrist, Rimbaud was unhurt. A few hours later, as Rimbaud was being accompanied to the train for Charleville by Verlaine and his mother, a reconciliation having taken place between the two men, the poet made another ineffectual attempt upon the life of Rimbaud.

Arrested as an assassin, he was lodged in a local prison, l'Amigo, and later sentenced to two years imprisonment at Mons. During his incarceration, Verlaine's wife obtained a divorce.

During his enforced sojourn at Mons the poet's fourth volume, the *Romances Sans Paroles* (Romances Without Words) was printed by his friend Lepelletier. This exquisite collection of poems was unnoticed by the press. Verlaine was tabooed in Paris. His name was synonymous with shame.

For five years after his release from prison in 1875, the poet led a wandering existence. He was by turns country school teacher in England, professor in an ecclesiastical college in France, and farmer at Coulommes, with Lucien Létinios. He drank, squandered his mother's small fortune, and failed in everything. Paris had long since forgotten him. His faithful mother was his only friend. As one writer says, Verlaine was "irregular in everything and a vagrant even in intellect."

The poet was back in Paris in 1881, where Victor

Palme, a Catholic publisher, brought out his *Sagesse.* The work attracted little notice, and the publisher, having in the meantime learned something of the author's life, destroyed the entire edition. Verlaine, endeavoring to support himself and mother by literary work, was aided greatly by his friend, Lepelletier, then editor of the *Réveil.* The poet was for a period on the regular staff of this paper, his work consisting mainly of short sketches which were collected in a prose volume entitled, *Les Mémoires d'un Veuf* (The Memories of a Widower).

Upon his return to Paris, the poet had found new faces and new writers. His boyhood friends had disappeared, or, becoming famous, had left their Bohemian days behind. Younger writers were forming the symbolic school, later to group themselves under the black flag of the *Décadents.* The *Parnassiens* of '68 had been hooted off the stage, and Verlaine, later to become chief bonze of this new school, was then almost unknown.

He began to be seen at the *Brasserie Bergère* and in the cafés of the Quartier Latin, where he was usually accompanied by Germain Noveau, and where he met many new faces. His singular appearance and capacity for drink doubtless inspired more attention than his genius as a poet. Suddenly leaving the city with his mother, the poet again took up farming near the scene of his former failure, and it was during this period (1883-84) that he was sentenced to a month's imprisonment for threatening, during a fit of drunkenness, the life of this devoted parent.

We find him back in Paris the following year, in company with his mother, who forgave him everything, but the poor woman, worn with sorrow, did not long survive, dying in January, 1886. The poet was now alone. He was ruined in finances, and his health was rapidly failing. Attacked with gout, his muscles atro-

phied, and his joints grew stiff. He could hardly walk. His last cent spent, he became an object of charity. With each recurring attack of rheumatism, the Municipality sent him to some hospital, so that practically the last years of his life were spent in the charity wards of these institutions. He had become famous, and as "Poor Lelain" filled much space in the papers. During one of his periods of convalescence he made a lecturing tour through Belgium, where he was everywhere received with becoming deference.

Besides various fragments in prose, biographies, travel notes and fantasies, his publisher, Vanier, brought out successively, in Verlaine's last years, several thin volumes of poems, none of which, however, equaled in literary value his earlier work.

"All things come to him who asks for nothing"—even death. The Green Fairy that had so long presided at his hours flew off one day. It was another Shape—something dark, something foreboding, that frightened it. Verlaine was again sober, but ill. The doctor came, looked into his face—that face "devoured by dreams, feverish and somnolent" and went away, shaking his head. The next day, January 8, 1896, the poet died.

Friends began to appear at the little furnished apartment on the rue Descartes, presided over by Eugénie Krantz, known sometimes as *Nini-Mouton*. This was the poet's last earthly asylum. Thanks to his mistress, he did not die in the hospital.

When all was over, a doctor who examined the body said, "the deceased had at least ten mortal maladies—he was worn out—the mere husk of a human being!"

A death mask was taken by the *mouleur* Méoni, and the expense of the funeral, which took place at the church, Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, was borne by friends, assisted by the State.

The poet was fifty-two years old when he died.

## III

### The Work

"Paul Verlaine is a juggler by the grace of God."—Aline Gorren.

Time is the great purifier. It is now (1916) twenty years since the subject of this study was laid in the grave. Human charity has mantled with kindly forgetfulness the faults inherent in his clay. In accord with that process of nature which wills that a thing of beauty shall never die, his poems have taken their deserving place in the world's literature.

"By the grace of God Paul Verlaine *was* a juggler," and something more! To the critic of his day the *tour de force* of this literary necromancer was that of stringing a number of brightly colored words on a gossamer thread of thought and calling the display a poem. The trick was easy. It required neither skill nor talent. A slight rearrangement of words, and presto! a symbolist. A dash of *diablerie* and we have—a *décadent*. There is really nothing new—but genius. Schools of poetry come and go. Yesterday it was a Futurist—today it is the Imagist. The cult is forgotten—the Poet alone lives.

The poems of Paul Verlaine fill three stout volumes. Owing to their subjective treatment and autobiographical character, they form a bewildering and contradictory index to his character. Save in his early verse, Verlaine was personal, first, last, and wholly.

Remy De Gourmont said the poet's first master was Banville; the second, Baudelaire, and the third him-

self. This characterization is probably the most accurate, briefly stated. However, the influence of Banville was not so pronounced as that of Baudelaire. The poet says in his *Confessions* that *Les Fleurs du Mal* was one of his earliest books, but that he pored over it without much comprehension.

Verlaine's literary activity extended through three distinct periods of French poetry—those of the *Parnassiens, Symbolists,* and *Décadents.* In common with all the *Parnassiens,* in his first literary expression, he was largely influenced not only by Baudelaire and Banville, but by Gautier and Leconte de Lisle. "The poets of this group sacrificed everything to form, seeking a sort of plastic beauty, replete with pictorial effect that charmed the ear although lacking in passion and ideas, and unable to reach the heart." *Émaux et Camées* and *Poèmes Saturniens* might be taken as the work of a single writer.

However, Paul Verlaine is not, on the whole, to be classed with any school of French poetry, even that of the *Décadents.* He very early dropped the formal, objective style of verse—the *Symbolist* movement affected him only slightly—and it was not until nearly the end of his troubled life that the so-called *Décadents* took him up and declared him their master.

This was the beginning of the period of his most original (though not most pleasing) literary expression. The name *Décadents,* given to a group of young writers, who, in 1864-5, used to frequent the cafés in the Quartier Latin, was originally meant as an insulting appellation. However, they immediately seized upon it as a slogan. Applied to literature, the word has little significance. The writers to whom it was directed were, many of them, producing beautiful work and creating something worthy of preservation. The word was used as a sort of generic term to describe all those writers of *Fin de Siècle* literature whose work seemed displeas-

ing to *bourgeois puritanisme*. The *Parnassiens* and *Symbolists* readily came under this characterization. The name persists.

Paul Verlaine transcends all schools. He might almost be called the first lyric voice in France. The French language, which lends itself to such surprising and charming prose, appears too formal and architectural for purely emotional poetry. However, at the hands of Verlaine the most beautiful results are obtained. "There are poems," says Arthur Symons, "which go as far as verse can go to become pure music, the voice of a bird with a human soul. . . With Verlaine, the sense of hearing and the sense of sight are almost interchangeable: he paints with sound and his line and atmosphere become music. . . His landscape painting is always an evocation, in which outline is lost in atmosphere."

Verlaine is entirely untrammeled by any conventional theories of composition. He moulds the language at his will. "Always the poet of instinct or impulse, verse to him is a spontaneous expression of feeling, conscious of no literary tradition and developing no consecutive thought," to quote Prof. Wells.

Lemaître, who, next to Prof. René Doumic, is the poet's severist critic, says that he uses the language "not like a great writer because he knows it, but like a child because he is ignorant of it. He gives wrong senses to words in his simplicity. . . He scarcely ever expresses movements of full consciousness or entire sanity. It is on this account, very often, that the meaning of his song is clear—if it is so at all—to himself alone. In the same way, his rhythms are sometimes perceptible by no one but himself."

For those who read them in the original language, those poems commonly most enjoyed are found in *Poèmes Saturniens, Fêtes Galantes, La Bonne Chanson,*

*Romances Sans Paroles,* and some of the poems in *Sagesse* and *Jadis et Naguère.*

From whence came the inspiration of the charming *Fêtes Galantes,* it would be difficult to say. Some writers profess that this, the *chef d'œuvre* of the school of the *Parnassiens,* was inspired by Victor Hugo's *La Fête Chez Thérèse;* others that Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream is the source. Lepelletier hazarding a guess, sums up his conclusions as follows: "No borrowed inspiration is to be found here; it is a synthesis of the art of the eighteenth century, a presentation of the manners, conversations and diversions of that dainty and superficial period."

Prof. Wells (Sewanee Review, 1895) writes: "To catch the grace of *L'Allée* or of *Columbine,* one must know a little of Parny and much of Watteau, for the former poem is a Dresden shepherdess in *Fin de Siècle* Alexandrines and the latter is her joyous companion in a song measure that might have charmed Banville himself."

This is what George Moore says of the poet: "Never shall I forget the first enchantment of *Les Fêtes Galantes.* Here all is twilight. The royal magnificences of the sunset have passed; the solemn beatitude of the night is at hand, but not yet here; the ways are veiled with shadow and lit with dresses, white, that the hour has touched with blue, yellow, green, mauve, and undecided purple; the voices? strange contraltos; the forms? not those of men or women, but mystic, hybrid creatures, with hands nervous and pale, and eyes charged with eager and fitful light . . . *'un soir équivoque d'automne,' . . . 'les belles pendent rêveuses à nos bras' . . .* and they whisper *'les mots spécieux et tout bas'."*

"Gautier sang to his antique lyre praise of the flesh and contempt of the soul; Baudelaire on a medieval organ chanted his unbelief in goodness and truth and

his hatred of life. But Verlaine advances a step further: hate is to him as commonplace as love, unfaith as vulgar as faith. The world is merely a doll to be attired today in a modern ball dress, tomorrow in aureoles and stars. The Virgin is a pretty thing, worth a poem, but it would be quite too silly to talk about belief or unbelief; Christ in wood or plaster we have heard too much of, but Christ in painted glass amid crosiers and Latin terminations, is an amusing subject for poetry. And strangely enough, a withdrawal from all commerce with virtue and vice is, it would seem, a licentiousness more curiously subtle and penetrating than any other; and the licentiousness of the verse is equal to that of the emotion; every natural instinct of the language is violated, and the simple music native in French metre is replaced by falsetto notes sharp and intense. The charm is that of an odor of iris exhaled by some ideal tissues, or of a missal in a gold case, a precious relic of the pomp and ritual of an archbishop of Persepolis."

From these "little biscuit" figures that might well be entitled Water Colors for a Fan—from these "twenty little pieces of verse, steeped to the lips in the French *dixhuitième siècles* perfumed and gilded atmosphere," *La Bonne Chanson,* which follows, is like a nuptial chime, which in truth it is.

These poems reflect all that was best and most wholesome in the poet's life. By no means the greatest of his work, they are, however, the most spontaneous. The language of love is so universal and so well understood, that those who find Verlaine obscure in his other work can have no cause for complaint in reading:

> "All grace and all light
> In the flush of her sixteen years."

Of *La Bonne Chanson* the poet once said, "I have always had a predilection for this poor little volume, into which the whole of a purified heart was put."

It was in *Romances Sans Paroles* that Verlaine found himself. A strange book, indeed, born of a troubled period of his early life. Here begins that litany which, while life lasted, he never ceased to chant—lament for the wife who, through his own fault, he had irrevocably lost. How thoroughly had he learned that *"Le passé n'est jamais une chose morte."*

Here, also, are emphasized those melancholy languors and peculiar thrills of grief which permeate so much of his verse. "Where Baudelaire is bitter, Verlaine is only sad," says Turquet-Milnes. And here, also, he seems "first to recognize the whole charm of the word half spoken . . . and of faltering with grace" in a manner which caused him to appear "less intellectually clear than emotionally simple." Ah, the hopelessness of love! "the vague sentiment that he listened to in his own mind, as to a far distant melancholy song:"

*"O triste, triste était mon âme*
*A cause, à cause d'une femme!"*

Writing of himself in *Mémoires d'un Veuf* (doubtless in a mood of intense *ennui* and forgetful of the full-blooded creatures of Parallèlement, of Casta Piana and other glorified courtesans) the poet says:

"Are you like myself? I hate people full of blood. I despise the whole rank of famous painters and sculptors, notwithstanding my admiration for their works. Noisy voices, rude laughter, shock me beyond expression,—in a word, I dislike health. By health I do not mean that marvelous harmony of soul and body which the heroes of Sophocles possessed, and the antique statues of pagan philosophers, but this dreadful, red face, noisy joy, burned, perspiring skin, plump hands, thick feet—the whole mass of body and colors, a superabundance of which our epoch seems to enjoy.

"From the same motives, I hate the so-called healthy poetry. Imagine only this: Beautiful girls, beautiful boys, beautiful souls,—'mens sana' etc.,—everything beautiful beyond words. As for the background: Green woods, green fields, blue of the sky, golden sun, weaving white,—I turn away in disgust.

"Are you like myself? If not, leave me alone. But if so, stay and tell me about a September afternoon, about a burning, sad afternoon, when the golden ray of melancholy falls upon the dying and over-ripe landscape. In such a frame, show me a quiet, queenlike figure of a woman, weary of suffering, whose youth is past but a few years. Her strength is not great; still, she can walk in the park. Clad in a white dress, she has large, gray eyes, like the sky, unchanging like the horizon. Truth is written in those eyes: a profound, warm passion is hidden in them.

"My heart and my thoughts accompany this pale enchantress, while, in her flowing dress, she walks over the faded flowers, among the over-ripe fruits, surrounded by the scent of autumn."

Of *Sagesse,* written in prison at Mons, an overpowering sense of shame and misery quite overbalanced his mind, already weakened by excessive use of stimulants. Enforced continence, also, contributed toward violent mental disturbances, so that he soon found himself in the frame of mind of some medieval, ecstatic monk and began pouring forth a series of verses as mystical and unintelligible as any in the Apocalypse. Quite in keeping with this mental attitude are the poems of Parallèlement, most of which were written at the same time. Ch. Donos, writing of this book, says: "The reading of Parallèlement is equivalent to taking an aphrodisiac of exquisite flavor. It evokes the vision of a horde of unbridled luxuries, hennying like a band of wild stallions turned loose among mares on an open prairie of the Far West. *Les passions les plus perverse,*

*les vices anormaux, hors-nature, sont célébrés, magnifiés dans ce livre. Mais en des vers si merveilleux de facture, avec de telles subtilités d'expression, d'un rythme tour à tour berceur comme de lents baisers, ou ravi dans l'élan des brutales étrientes qu'il en garde le caractère d'une œuvre littéraire, sincère et de haute valeur poétique."*

Verlaine's poetical output after his release from prison and the publication of *Sagesse* was more mature and original, though less brilliant. *Jadis et Naguère* contained some poems in his best vein—likely written, however, at an earlier period. In *Amour* the poet celebrates in graceful verses his friendship for Lucien Létinois. Here, also, may be found some of his strongest, most original and best poised work. The note is largely personal. In Parallèlement, to quote Stefan Zweig, "he won the crown of all pornographic works with perverse and indecent poems." *Bonheur* is a less ardent *Sagesse* where the note of self-pity predominates and *Chansons pour Elle* and *Odes en Son Honneur* celebrate his various mistresses. These two books are distorted echoes of The Good Song resounding in an empty heart. *Liturgies Intimes* are little less puerile than portions of *Sagesse.* With advancing years his work showed steady deterioration, and his voice, for the most part, was that of

*". . . un vieux poète erre dans la gouttière*
*Avec la triste voix d'un fantôme frileux."*

As Verlaine's poetry defies analysis in its original language, so does it defy interpretation in English.

"How much of his work will live?" asks a writer reviewing Lepelletier's Life of Verlaine in Current Literature. "Perhaps a hundred pages, but those pages will give him a place among the poets of the 19th century. He is nothing of a teacher; he throws no illumi-

nating ray upon the problems that vex humanity; he speaks to us neither of fortitude nor hope, but in its verbal magic and power to evoke half-forgotten moods and emotions, the best of Verlaine's work is the pure gold of literature."

## IV

### The Cult of Verlaine

That the quality of much of the work of Paul Verlaine is of the highest literary value, and that his fame is growing rather than diminishing are incontestable facts.

George A. Tournoux, in his Bibliographie Verlainienne (Leipzig, Libraire E. Rowohlt, 1912) indicates 1,044 references upon the subject of his monograph. This work, although of great value to the student, makes no pretension to being complete. The compiler of this interesting contribution to letters says in the introduction: "We have thought it necessary to disregard the notations in the general histories of French literature, the encyclopedias, and the works of ephemeral value, also those studies where the question of Verlaine appears merely in an accidental or summary manner. . . If we have departed from this line of conduct in favor of certain articles, it is because of the eminence of their authors as well as the character of the periodical, or that the circumstances under which they were published gave them a particular value."

The Tournoux monograph, which carries the work of research up to the beginning of the year 1911, is divided into two sections. The first deals with the work of Verlaine published in France. One notation (107) in this division shows the complete works of the poet to have been published in Leipzig by Rowohlt in 1910. Interesting also to note are the books of a pornographic

character which have at times fallen under the ban of the courts:

1867

5. Les Amies. Scènes d'amour saphique. Sonnets. Par le licencié Pablo de Herlagnez. Bruxelles. Poulet-Malassis. Petit in-12.
6. Les Amies. Scènes d'amour saphique. Sonnets. Par le licencié, Pablo de Herlagnez. Ségovie. 1870. Petit in-12.

1890

37. Femmes. Imprimé sous le manteau et ne se vend nulle part. in-18.

1904

91. Hombres. Imprimé sous le manteau et ne se vend nulle part. in-18.

1907

94. La Trilogie érotique de Paul Verlaine. (Amies, Femmes, Hombres). Paris et Londres. in-8. Quinze eaux-fortes de Van Troizem et un avant-propos par un bibliophile verlainien.

It was the first of these, *Les Amies* (The Friends) dealing with female friendships of a Lesbian nature, which caused the order of arrest of the publisher, the redoubtable A. P. Malassis, of Brussels, publisher, also of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal.*

The destruction of *Les Amies* was ordered by the courts of Lille, May 6, 1868. Lepelletier, in his biography of the poet, writes of this book with much *naïveté,* as follows: "These Sonnets . . . are now inoffensive in consequence of later publications in France, both in prose and verse, by numerous writers on the same dangerous subject; but at that time (date of

publication), even for a Poulet-Malassis it was an audacious undertaking."

Gautier said the inexpressible does not exist! *Les Amies* in their complete form are now included in most of Verlaine's works—that is, in other than the English language. The pseudonym, Pablo de Herlagnez, bears witness that youth is often more circumspect than age. *Les Amies* was published when the poet was quite young.

In 1899-1900 Vanier published in Paris five volumes of the poet's work. This edition consists of three volumes of verse and two of prose. The work is loosely edited and contains numerous errors. The general reader will find in the anthology of 1891, Choix de Poésies, (Charpentier et Fasquell. Paris. in-12) a good presentation of the poet's style. It contains also an excellent portrait by Eugène Carrière, and an admirable preface by François Coppée.

An edition de luxe of Fêtes Galantes was published in 1903 by *Le Maison du Livre.* Paris. in-8. This contains twenty-four drawings and an equal number of ornamentations by Roubadi.

Part second of the Bibliographie Verlainienne is given to notices of translations, critical studies, and the general diffusion of Verlaine's work, both in France and elsewhere. The notations in the chapter devoted to France and French speaking countries number two hundred and fifty-one.

In *Hommage à Verlaine* (Paris. Messein. 1910. in-4) is found a book containing the appreciation of sixty-six of the foremost writers of France, both men and women.

Verlaine's popularity in Spain is attested by an anthology of translations into Spanish by M. Machado, published in Madrid in 1908. This collection embraces practically all the poems worthy of preservation. There are several other Spanish anthologies less com-

plete. Jiménez writes in the *Helios* (October, 1903) *Pablo Verlaine y su novia la luna* (Paul Verlaine and his bride the moon. *Llanto en mi corazón. . .* (It weeps in my heart) is set to music by R. Villar from words by E. Diez-Canedo. (Madrid et Bilboa. Casa-Dotesio.)

Bolivia, Argentina, Mexico, Santo Domingo and other Spanish-American countries know the poet through translations by native writers.

In Italy Pica and Ermini have written much concerning the poet. There are no anthologies in book form. Lombroso pays his respect (?) to the poet in *Nuovi studi sol genio* (New studies on genius).

Roumania has only one collection of the poet's work in the anthology of D. Anghel and St. O. Josif. (Bucharest. "Minerva." 1903. in-16.)

In Russia Verlaine is popular and has been widely read, both in the French and Slavonic tongues. Broussov's anthology, published in Moscow in 1911, is the longest. Petrograd has a translation by F. Sologoub, 1908. Russia is also credited with a number of other, though shorter, collections.

To English readers it appears singular that the cult of Verlaine should be so widespread in Germany. To those, however, who have closely followed the trend of German literature and thought during the past two decades, the fact is not surprising. Tournoux notations for Germany are as follows:

1900

564. O. Hauser. Paul Verlaine. Berlin. Concordia. Petit in-16.
565. P. Wiegler. Baudelaire und Verlaine. Berlin. Behr's Verlag. in-16.

1902

566. Paul Verlaine. Gedichte. Eine Anthologie der besten Ubertragungen. Herausgegeben von

Stefan Zweig. Berlin et Leipzig. Schuster ct Loeffler. in-16.

567. E. Singer. Paul Verlaine. Gedichte. Vienne et Leipzig. Neue Literaturanstalt. in-16.

568. H. Kirchner. Gedichte von Paul Verlaine. Halle. Hendel. in-16.

569. O. Händler. Paul Verlaine. Ausgewählte Gedichte. Strasburg. Heitz ct Muendel. in-16.

571. R. Schaukal. Verlaine-Heredia. Nachdichtungen. Berlin. Oesterheld. in-8.

572. W. von Kalckreuth. Paul Verlaine. Ausgewählte Gedichte. Leipzig. Insel-Verlag. in-16.

Among other writers who have contributed to the diffusion of the poet's works in Germany are Arnold, Mehring, Ostwald, George, Gundlach, Abels, Bethge, Jaffé, Evers and Henckell. Nearly all the leading German magazines, as well as newspapers, have published notices upon Verlaine and his work.

In Holland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Hungary, Greece, Portugal and Bohemia, the poet has found appreciative readers.

In English speaking countries, Verlaine has been appreciated but not widely read. Perhaps the irregularities of his conduct during his life attract the attention of the public more than his work.

George Moore, Arthur Symons, F. A. Cazals, John Gray, Ernest Dowson and Ashmore Wingate are prominent among English writers who have spread his fame. To George Moore, more than to any other, is due the credit of introducing him to the English public, and no one has written more interestingly of the poet. Until the present, Wingate's translation has been the longest in English. Symons' translations, all too few in number, surpass in workmanship any heretofore published in English. These have appeared in the Mosher collection of gift books in America.

In many ways the translation of Verlaine's poems by

Gertrude Hall, translator of Chantecler, is most satisfactory. It is to be regretted the collection is so abridged. Published by Stone & Kimball, Chicago, 1895. Verlaine has been known to American readers chiefly through this work.

Throughout his life Verlaine was an interesting subject for artists. Dégas painted him in the Absinthe Drinker, and Zorn, Pearson, Cazals, Carriére and many others have contributed interesting studies. Cazals' drawing, which hangs in the National Museum of the Luxembourg, Paris, is most striking. Here the idealization is marked. The poet is no longer the man of enigmatic bumps and grotesque visage, but the inmate of a hospital—a neutral spot on the borderland of Death—and all his being seems blurred with ineffable mystery.

Numerous composers have set his songs to music—poems so musical in themselves that music of another seems almost a profanation. In America John Alden Carpenter has set to music four poems. Published by Schirmer, New York.

The poet's statue stands in the Luxembourg gardens, and an annual dinner is given in Paris to the memory of this great child—for all poets are only men who have kept fresh in their hearts the fancies of childhood—and Verlaine kept also the weaknesses.

BERGEN APPLEGATE.

May, 1916.

# POEMS SATURNINE

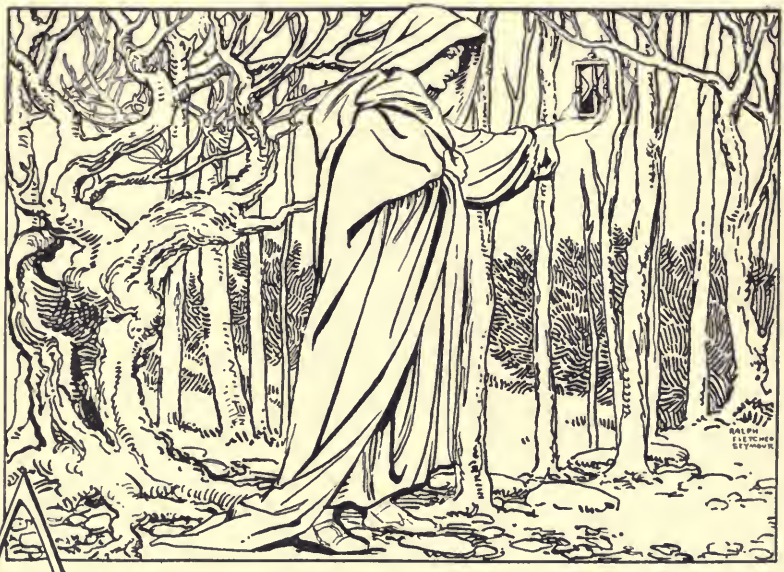
*(POÈMES SATURNIENS)*

## TO EUGÈNE CARRIÈRE

THE Wise of old, as learned as men today,
Believed, and this point yet is not quite clear,
That they could read their future in the skies,
And that each soul was guided by a star.
(Men have railed much nor have they paused to think
How foolish and deceiving laughter is
Concerning all these mysteries nocturne.)
Now those who have been born in SATURN'S reign,
(Red planet dear to necromancers) have,
Between them, so magicians used to say,
Full measure of unhappiness and bile.
The Imagination, infirm and weak,
Distorts the subtile efforts of the Will,
And in their veins the poisoned blood-stream flows
Like lava, withering all before, so that
The sad Ideal often is put out.
So must they suffer, these Saturnians,
So must die—admitting they are mortal.
Their plan of life was fashioned line by line
According with an influence malign.

P. V.

# MELAN?
## RESIGNATION



# A CHILD I DREAMED

ALWAY OF KOHINOOR,
OF PAPAL SHOW AND PERSIAN SPLENDOR.
HELIOGABALUS AND SARDANAPALUS!

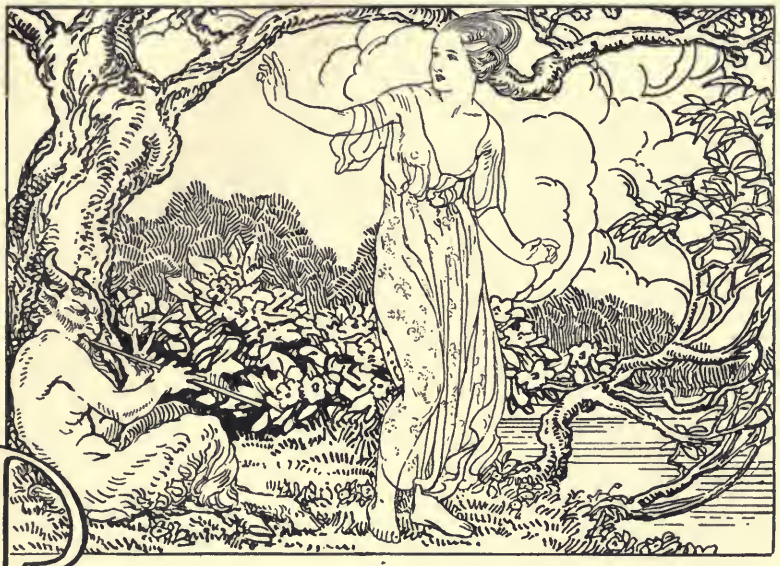
My young desire created, 'neath domes splashed o'er
With gold, 'mid sounds of music, perfumes fresh,
The wild delirious harems of the flesh.

Today more calm, with no less ardent mind,
But knowing life and how its ways should lie,
I am more fit to check my ancient folly,
Though even yet I cannot be resigned.

So be! My taste for grandeur shows betime.
But fie on phrases fine and fair things human!
Henceforth I'll hate the merely pretty woman,
The prudent soul and the resounding rhyme.

# CHOLIA

## NEVERMORE



# REMEMBRANCE,

REMEMBRANCE, WHAT WOULDST THOU?
THE AUTUMN
THRUSH ON LANGUID AIRS IS SADLY BLOWN,
And the sun's wan rays monotonously thrown
On yellowing fields where weary winds make moan.

She and I were alone, walking and dreaming,
Our hair and our thoughts in the wind over-bold.
Suddenly she turned toward me, her soft eyes gleaming,
"Which was your happiest day?" said her voice of pure gold

With its timbre angelic, sonorous and sweet.
And the smile that I gave for reply was discreet
As the kiss that I gave her white hand in devotion.

—Ah! The first flowers and their perfume one sips!
And the low sound with its charming emotion—
The first "yes" that comes from well-beloved lips.

## III

### After Three Years

I PUSHED aside the narrow swinging gate
To stroll within the garden green and small,
Some morning rays the sun let sweetly fall,
Spangling the flowers with jewels, as in state.

Nothing has changed. I have seen all: the vine,
The humble arbor with its rustic chairs. . .
The jet of water playing silvery airs,
And the old aspen with its plaint divine!

The roses nod, as of old, and one sees
The lily proudly balance on the breeze.
The larks that go and come I know them yet.

I even found Valleda standing there
At the walk's end, her plaster scaled, and bare,
—Frail, 'mid the pungent scent of mignonette.

## IV

### Vow

AH! the raptures! the first mistresses!
Gold hair, blue eyes, and blossoms of the flesh.
The odor of the bodies young and fresh.
The fearful joy of the first shy caresses!

Has all forever gone—sweet foolishness!
And all those old time candors! Ah, returning

Toward youth's lost spring they've fled, the winter spurning
Of my ennui, disgust and sore distress!

So here am I at last, sad and alone,
Cold as an altar—colder than a stone—
Orphan, who knows no elder sister's love.

O woman, whose caress my soul beguiled,
Brunette, pensive and sweet, that naught can move,
Who sometimes kisses gently, like a child!

## V

### Lassitude

*A batallas de amor campo de pluma.*
(Gongora).

O THE sweetness, O the sweetness, O the sweetness!
Calm your fevered transports for a while, my charming!
Be like a sister, sometimes, peacefully warming,
And soothing for one fleeting hour love's wild excess.

Be languorous, making the drowsy caresses;
All equal your sighs and your glances obsession.
Go, the jealous embrace and pang of possession
Are not worth the price of the long lying kiss.

But in your dear heart of gold, you tell me, my child,
The false passion goes sounding her clarion wild.
Let her sound at her ease, hussy delirious.

Put your forehead on my forehead, your hand in mine,
And make me the oaths you will break, oh, so fine.
And weep till the dawn, O little imperious!

## VI

### My Familiar Dream

OFTTIMES I have this strange and penetrating dream:
An unknown woman whom I love and who loves me,
And who, though never changing, ever seems to be
Another—in whose eyes I see a well known gleam.

She understands. My heart that doth transparent seem
For her alone, alas, ceases also to be
For her, alone, a problem; and her tears fall free
Upon my pallid brow, refreshing as a stream.

Brunette, or blonde, or Titian-haired? I do not know!
Her name? 'Twas sweet I well recall when spoken low,
As sweet as those beloved ones by Life exiled.

Her glance is that of statues—looks that vaguely thrill—
And for her voice—calm, faintly sounding, gravely mild,
It hath the echo of dear voices long since still.

## VII

### To a Woman

TO you these songs for the consoling grace
Of your great eyes where laughs and weeps a dream;
For your pure soul whose goodness sheds a beam—
To you these songs out of my deep distress.

What hideous nightmares haunt me in this place;
Foolish, jealous, furious, and that seem
To multiply like wolves whose white fangs gleam,
Threatening the while to leave their bloody trace.

Oh! how I suffer, suffer and repine,
So that the first grief of the world's first man
Driven from Eden scarce compares with mine!

And may your cares be like, or lighter than
The swallows on a sky of afternoon,
Dear—on a fair September day, in tune.

## ETCHINGS

### I

### Parisian Sketch

THE moon was spreading pale tints of zinc
Obliquely let fall;
And the rising smoke-shapes made one think
Of a figure five o'er the house tops tall.

The sky was gray, with a wind that sighed
Like a sad bassoon;
And afar a shivering tomcat cried
With the strange frail notes of a ghostly tune.

And I dreamed of Plato as I strolled on,
And of Phidias,
And of Salamis, and of Marathon,
'Neath the blinking eyes of blue jets of gas.

## III

### Marine

THE deep sounding sea
Throbs under the eye
Of the sad moon on high—
Throbs mournfully.

Whilst the lightning, sheer,
Cuts brutally down
Through heavens of brown
With long zigzag clear.

And the waves rising high
With long convulsive bound,
From reef to reef resound,—
Go, come, shine and cry.

In the heavens, where flee
The storm gods in wonder,
Fierce roars the thunder
Formidably. . .

## IV

### Effects of Night

THE night. The rain. A pale sky cut with ragged jet
Black towers and spires that are today the silhouette
Of an old Gothic town, dim in the distant gray.
The plain. A gibbet full of hanging rogues that sway
Shaken and torn by cutting beaks of famished crows,

And dancing in the dark strange life-like jigs in rows,
The while their dangling feet the wolves make pasture of.
Some bushes with their scattered thorns, and then above
Some hollies turning as with horror their wet leaves
Now to the right, now left, as when the eye perceives
Them on the sooty background of an artist's sketch.
And then, around three livid barefoot prisoners stretch
A host of halberdiers, like giants marching by;
Whose straight set, harrow pointed pikes seem to the eye
The rain's keen lances thrown from a black sky.

## V

### Grotesques

THEIR legs serve for horses,
For all gifts the gold of their eyes,
By the road of adventures
They go, torn and despised.

The wise, indignant, harangue them;
Fools rail at their hazardous way;
The children put out their tongues
And the girls mock them all day.

They are the ridiculous;
Odious and malignant they seem.
They have in the twilight
The air of a bad dream.

On their bitter guitars
These libertines strike the shrill string;
Intoning the chants bizarre,
Nostalgic and revolting.

And at last in their eyes
Laughs and weeps, or fastidiously nods,
The love of things eternal—
The old dead and the ancient gods!

Go then, old vagabonds!
Wander, noxious creatures of old vice,
Along abyss and strand
Shut out from paradise!

For nature joins with man
To punish rightly by and by,
The melancholy pride that makes
You march with forehead high.

Venging on you the blasphemy
Of vast hopes and violent intents;
Bruising your foreheads curst
With the rude elements.

June burns, and December
Freezes your flesh where the bones show through.
The fever possesses your limbs
Wracked and covered with dew.

Wounded and repulsed by all,
When death shall seek you out in turn,
Meager and cold, your carcasses
Even the wolves will spurn!

## SOMBER LANDSCAPES

### I

### Setting Suns

A FEEBLE dawn
On the fields shining
Pours the melancholy
Of the suns declining.
The melancholy
Refrain of sweet songs,
My heart forgetting
To the suns' declining.
And with strange
Dreams in bands,
Like the suns
Declining on the strands,
Phantoms (red ones)
Defiling without ceasing—
Defiling, one by one,
With the great suns
Declining on the sands.

## II

### Twilight of Mystic Eve

MEMORY, here with the Twilight
Reddens and trembles on the distant rim
Of ardent sky, where Hope glows like a bright
Enduring flame, that, wavering and slim,
Draws back and then expands like some far dim
Mysterious garden; where flower on flower
—Dahlia, lily, tulip and buttercup—
Grow rank upon a trellis, blooming hour by hour
In flaming rings; where noxious mists exude
A perfume strong and warm, whose poison
—Dahlia, lily, tulip and buttercup—
Drowning my soul, my senses, and my reason,
Unites, in one vast lassitude,
Memory here with the Twilight.

## III

### Promenade Sentimental

THE sunset darted its level beam
Where the wind-rocked water lilies dream;
The water lilies calm and pale
That shine where reeds are green and frail.
And I wandered alone with a heart full sore,
By the pool where the willows line the shore,
Where the vague mist wakened a phantom tall
That wept in the voice of the wild fowls' call,
When they beat their wings by the willows white
Where I wandered alone in the shrouding night
Through the shadows that drowned the level beam
Where the wind-rocked water lilies dream—
The water lilies calm and pale
That shine where the reeds are green and frail.

## IV

### Valpurgis Night, Classic

THIS is rather the sabbat of the second Faust, than
the other;
A rhythmic sabbat—rhythmic as a lay
Is rhythmic. Imagine a garden by Lenotre—
Correct, ridiculous and gay.

Flower beds in circle—in their midst, the fountains;
walks
Arrow straight and sylvan gods in marble; gods marine
In bronze; with here and there a Venus coyly draped;
The trees aligned; a bowling green;

Chestnut trees; and flowering plants forming a leafy
dune;
Some dwarfed rose bushes set about with loving care;
Beyond, the yews well placed in triangle. The moon
Of summer shining softly there.

Midnight sounds, and wakens in the depth of this old
park
A melancholy air—a heavy, slow and sadly listless
air—
A huntsman's lay, sweet, low and melancholy as
The hunting song in Tannhauser.

Then comes a veiled and distant chant of horns, whose
tenderness
Of sense quite overcomes the soul's distress with sweet
accords,
Harmoniously discordant in their wild excess;
And to this call of horns

There comes a band of white-robed, slowly moving
forms
Diaphanous, on which the moon beams seem to play
With opal tints among the shadows of the branches
green—
A Watteau dreamed of by Raffet.

And mingling with the soft green shadows of the trees,
With gestures languishing and full of grief profound,
These forms amid the bronzes begin a mystic dance—
A dance wherein they circle slowly round.

These swaying spectres—are they nothing but the
thought
Of some poor drunken bard—or the remorse in his
bewildered head—

These spectres that with rhythmic tread dance on the turf?
Or are they simply spirits of the dead?

Are they then thy regrets, O dreamer who invites this hell,—
Thy thoughts, or thy remorse—say?—these creatures spurned?
These spectres that some maddening impulse sways;
Or have the dead to madmen turned?

No matter! they are always here, these phantoms of the brain,
Making their mournful round and winding ever on;
Whirling like atoms in the clear rays of the sun,
That in a moment suddenly are gone.

Pallid and damp, the dawn o'ercomes them one by one—
The horns and all—they pass with coming day—
Till nothing more remains—nothing—but a garden by Lenotre,
Correct, ridiculous and gay.

## V

### Autumn Song

LONG sobbing winds,
The violins
Of autumn drone,
Wounding my heart
With languorous smart
In monotone.

Choking and pale,
When on the gale
  The hour sounds deep,
I call to mind
Dead years behind,
  And I weep.

And I, going,
Borne by blowing
  Winds and grief,
Flutter, here—there,
As on the air
  The dying leaf.

## VI

### The Shepherd's Hour

THE moon is red upon the eastern sky,
In mists that dance the smoky meadow lies;
Afar one hears the frog that shrilly cries
Among the reeds where twilight zephyrs die.

The marsh flowers close beside the water's edge;
The poplars profile on the skies' far rim,
Serried and straight, their specters vague and dim;
While the wandering firefly seeks the hedge.

The screech-owls waking take their noiseless flight,
Beating the black air with their heavy wings;
The sky is filled with dully shining things,
White, Venus glistens—it is Night.

## VII

### The Nightingale

LIKE frightened birds loud calling in their flight,
My memories beat upon me with their might.
Beat on the yellow foliage of my heart,
That, like a lonely alder grown apart,
Mirrors its trunk and blighted branches wet
In the dull violet waters of Regret
That slow and ever mournfully flow near.
And then the troubled sound made by a drear
Moist breeze that mounts, then slowly dies—so well
That in the end I hear from out the dell
Only the low clear voice celebrating
The absent Loved One—O so languishing!
Of that sweet bird, my first Love, whose warm lay
Comes back again as in the first glad day;
And in the splendor sad a glow where soon
Rises all pale and solemnly the moon;
A melancholy twilight full of summer,
Of silence and obscurity—no murmur
Rocked on the azure that the sweet wind sweeps—
Only the tree that trembles—the bird that weeps.

# CAPRICES

## I

### Woman and Cat

SHE was playing with her cat,
Marvelous it was to see,
Hands and paws, tit for tat,
In the gloom so playfully.

One was hiding—then a pause!
'Neath her mittens, finely made,
Gleamed the agate-pointed claws,
Keener than a razor's blade.

Then the cat more tender grew,
And its steel-like claws withdrew.
But the devil watched with care. . .

And the dimly lighted room
Heard her laugh that circled where
Four bright eyeballs cut the gloom.

## III

### Song of the Ingénues

WE are the Ingénues
With braided hair and eyes of blue
Who live in old romances
Unread save by the few.

And arm in arm we go,
For the day is not more bright
Than the crystal of our thoughts,
And our dreams are of the light.

We run in the meadows
Where our laughter never dies,
From dawn until the vespers
We chase the butterflies.

And our shepherds' bonnets
Keep us fresh and pale,
And our dresses white
Are so extremely frail.

The Caussades and the Richelieux,
And the Knights Faublas all pass,
But they only waste their ogling,
Their salutes and sighs "alas!"

For in vain these foolish mimics
Can only break the nose
Against the folds ironic
Of our skirts, so like the snows.

And thus our lofty station
Disturbs these gallants all—
These warm imaginations,
And leapers of the wall.

Howe'er, with hearts fast beating,
Clandestine thoughts between,
We sigh to know the lovers
Future—and libertine.

## V

### Monsieur Prudhomme

A SOLEMN man is he—father, and mayor benign.
His ears half buried in his collar high. His eyes
Lost in a stupid dream—a dream that ever flies—
And his embroidered slippers where the spring flowers shine!

Ah, what to him the golden stars—the hedges fine
Where in the shadow sings the bird? And what the skies
To him, or the green meadow that in silence lies?
For Monsieur Prudhomme has this laudable design

To make the rich Monsieur Machin his son-in-law.
A pudgy, fat, respected botanist, he saw
In every poet born a good-for-nothing cheat.

These bearded, uncombed loafers, how he hates them
—whew!
They fill his soul with horror, all this shameful crew—
And flowery springtime shines upon his slippered feet!

## SUB URBE

THE little yews of the cemetery
Tremble before the wintry blasts
In the clear cold light.

With a sound mournful and sad
The crosses of wood over the new graves
Vibrate with an abnormal tone.

Silent as the streams,
But full of tears as the floods,
The sons, the mothers, and the widows

Through the paths of the sad enclosure
Wander, a slow procession,
To the wounding rhythm of sobs.

The yielding soil under their feet seems to cry.
On high the huge clouds twist
And tear themselves with fury.

Penetrating as remorse
Falls the heavy cold that o'erpowers,
Seeming to reach even to the dead.

To the poor dead, who are always
Alone, and who tremble unceasingly,
—Forgotten by some or wept by others.

Ah, come quickly, O thou Springtime,
With thy clear and caressing sun,
With thy sweet birds chattering!

Make bloom with enchanting
Glory the gardens and the fields
That the rude winter holds in distress!

And, when the sunsets fall
Spreading with gold the boundless sky,
Soothe with sweet odors and with songs

Dear absent ones, your mournful sleep!

## SERENADE

LIKE the voice of one dead yet singing
From the depth of the grave,
Hear thou, O my mistress, the stinging
Shrill voice of thy slave.

Open thy soul and thy ear to the sound
Of my mandolin;
For thee have I made, for thee to resound,
This song cruel and thin.

I sing to thine eyes, they are onyx and golden,
No shadows are there;
To thy bosom, as Lethe, the olden—
To the Styx of thy hair.

Like the voice of one dead yet singing
From the depth of the grave,
Hear thou, O my mistress, the stinging
Shrill voice of thy slave.

Then I praise over-much, as befitting,
Thy flesh ever blest,
Whose opulent perfume comes flitting
Through my nights of unrest.

And I sing of thy red lips, intently—
Lips red as a jewel;
Of the martyrdom laid on me gently,
My Angel—my Ghoul!

Open thy soul and thy ear to the sound
Of my mandolin;
For thee have I made, for thee, to resound
This song cruel and thin.

## A DAHLIA

COURTESAN with hard breast and eye opaque and brown,
That slowly opens like the calm eyes of a steer,
Your thick stem shines like marble, newly cut and clear.

Flower plump and rich, yet odorless, all your renown
Is in your tempting body, serene as summer skies,
That dully glows, displaying its rare harmonies.

Nor have you flesh like those fair ones who all the day
Strew on the summer fields the rows of new mown hay,
Enthroning you, dumb idol, 'midst the incense light.

—Thus, the kingly Dahlia, clad in robes of splendor,
Rises without pride his head that has no odor,
Disdainfully, among the taunting jasmines white.

## NEVERMORE

ONWARD, my poor heart! Onward, *my old accomplice!*
Redress and paint anew each flaunting archway bold.
Burn a rancid incense on the altars of false gold.
Sow with flowers the borders of the precipice.
Onward my poor heart! Onward, *my old accomplice!*

Lift to God thy canticle, rejuvenated singer!
Entone, hoarse organ, thy Te Deums rising high.
Men, old before your time, paint the wrinkles 'neath your eye,
Cover the yellow walls with tapestry maroon.
Lift to God thy canticle, rejuvenated singer!

Sound chimes! Sound little bells! Sound bells!
For my vain dream has taken shape and now I hold
It pressed between my arms—this Happiness of old,
That flies when men approach—this joy unspeakable.
Sound chimes! Sound little bells! Sound bells!

Happiness has walked side by side with me.
But Fate can ne'er desist, such is life's fitful scheme.
The worm is in the fruit, the awakening in the dream,
And remorse in love, such is the law of life.
Happiness has walked side by side with me.

## IL BACIO

### (The Kiss)

THE Kiss! Pink hollyhock in Love's domain!
A lively tune on little keys of pearl
Framed by the lips of some dear girl.
An angel's song with love's well known refrain.

Sweet sounding Kiss! O melody divine!
What luxury can match your drunkenness?
From your bright cup man drinks his deepest bliss,
And thus grows dizzy as from heavy wine.

Like the Rhine's vintage, or a singer's rhymes,
You soothe our pain—old sorrows cold
Die with the pout upon each purple fold—
Let Avon's swan or Goethe praise betimes.

I, unworthy bard of Paris, offer this:
These childish verses, sad bouquet at best;
Be kind, and speed you on your gracious quest;
Light on her stubborn lips and laugh—thou Kiss!

## IN THE WOODS

SOME,—the innocent or the lymphatic—
Find in the woods charms languorous or gay;
Fresh airs, and odors warm. Happy are they!
Others quail—dreamers—with fears ecstatic.

They are happy! I, nervous, that a dread
Vague and oppressive ever seems to rule,
I tremble in the forests like a fool
Who fears an ambush or may fear the dead.

These branches thick, like billows without bound,
Where falls black silence and where falls a shade
Still blacker—all this mournfulness displayed,
Fills me with horror, foolish, yet profound.

Summer eves the redness of the sunsets
Is sunk in the gray-blue of mists they paint
With fire and blood; the angelus so faint
Seems like a plaintive cry of sad regrets.

The winds rise warm and strong; the ripples race
With force renewed where the thick leaves are strewn
On the high oaks that seem to importune,—
Then scatter like a fever into space.

The night comes. The owl flies. This is the time
When one dreams of the tales the old folks tell. . .
Yonder, yonder, the quick springs in the dell
Whisper like robbers plotting some dark crime.

## MARCO

WHEN Marco passed, the young men ran and turned
To see her eyes, two Sodomites where burned
The fires of Love, destroying without grace,
Cold Friendship's lowly hut—sad dwelling place.
And all around danced perfumes without name,
Where souls forever lost were weeping cast.
Upon the red gold of her hair hung fast
A charm, and from her robe strange music came,
When Marco passed.

When Marco sang, her hands upon the ivory
Often evoked from depths too black to see,
Primitive tunes, long lost and unprecise;
Her rich voice rising in the paradise
Of a vast symphony of wondrous dream,
With ecstasy transported as it sprang
Toward the *known* heavens, all who heard its tang
Of silvery music sounding some vague theme,
When Marco sang.

When Marco wept, her tears and wild alarms
Seemed to defy the very sound of arms;
Her blood-red lips with deeper carmine shown,
And her despair no human soul has known;

As though an oil-fed fire that flames on high,
Her wrath shown redder as it higher leapt;
Some lioness, one might have said, that kept
Its forest wrath with ever blazing eye,
When Marco wept.

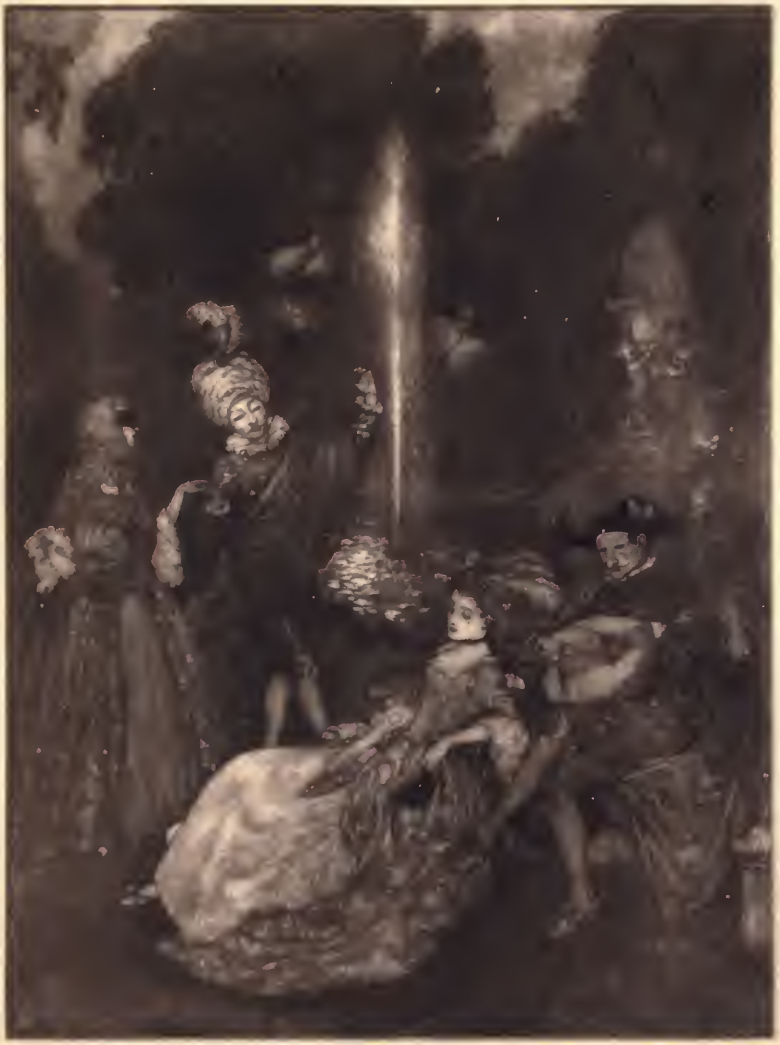
When Marco danced, her silken skirt, moiré,
Swept like the tides upon a summer day;
And like a lithe bamboo her snowy thigh
Bent with a grace that made her breasts reply.
The lightning flashed; her marble limbs so free,
Emphatically cynical, enhanced
Their splendors terne: who listened heard entranced
The sound of night winds blowing in a tree,
When Marco danced.

When Marco slept, what odors rich of amber
Mixed with her flesh, filled and oppressed her chamber.
The sheets revealed her back's exquisite line,
And in the shadows of the curtains fine
Her breath arose, light, rhythmical and slow.
In calm and happy sleep her eyes were kept,
And this sweet mystery threw a charm that swept
The objects vaguely outlined, row on row,
When Marco slept.

But when she loved, the floods of luxury
O'er ran as though a wound, open and free,
Threw its red blood in many a smoking wave
From the all cruel form whose crime forgave.
And o'er the soul's high walls a torrent came,
Drowning the thought, sweeping with sad array
All in its path, then bounding on its way
As supple and devouring as a flame—
Then frozen lay.

# FÊTES GALLANT

*(FÊTES GALANTES)*



MOONLIGHT

## MOONLIGHT

YOUR soul is like a landscape always glad,
Peopled by merry maskers with bright eyes,
Who play the lute and dance yet are half sad
Beneath the tinsel of their quaint disguise.

Who sing upon a strangely minor mode
Of love's success and life so opportune,
As they go tripping lightly on their road,
Mingling their songs with rays caught from the moon,

The moonlight rays so sad but O how fair!
That make the drowsy birds dream in their trees,
And sob with ecstasy the fountain clear
That from its marble bed jets in the breeze.

## PANTOMIME

PIERROT, who gets nothing from Clitander,
Empties a flagon—failing to render
Thanks—and, being practical, cuts the pie.

Cassandra, who is nearly lost to view,
Weeps for her disinherited nephew
Stage tears, that all ignore, with streaming eye.

The rascal, Harlequin, plans to elope
With Columbine—a vain and foolish hope—
And then saucily pirouettes four times.

Columbine dreams, strangely surprised to feel
Emotion in the breeze's soft appeal,
And voices in her heart. What foolish mimes!

## ON THE GRASS

THE Abbé wanders.—And you, Marquis,
Have donned, all awry, your perruque.
—This old wine of Cyprus, I see,
Is exquisite—less, Camargo, than your *nuque*.

—My flame. . .—Do, mi, sol, la, si.
—Abbé, your cunning we unveil.
—Ladies, I die, indeed, for thee,
If in trying to unhook a star I fail.

—I wish to be a little dog today.
—Let each one kiss his shepherdess, and soon—
One after the other! Gentlemen—hey?
—Do, mi, sol.—Ho! Good evening, Mr. Moon!

## THE WALK

PAINTED and powdered as in the old pastoral days,
Frail amid the enormous bows of ribbon red,
She passes 'neath the somber bower that gently sways
Above a walk where some old moss-green seats are spread;
With false affected ways and playful foolish air,
Such as a petted gaudy parrot loves to wear.
Her robe with its long train is blue and her fan bright
Held by slim fingers decked with many a large ring,
Is gay with quaint erotic scenes, so vague and light
She smiles, as in a dream, at all the thoughts they bring.
—A blonde indeed. The saucy nose with lips to match.
Mouth carmine, body plump, and proud, nor knowing why.
—Besides, a trifle wiser than the beauty-patch
So deftly set beneath the rather silly eye.

## THE PROMENADE

SLIM trees, and sky where a pale light clings,
Seem to smile on our costumes clear,
Floating as light on the evening air
As the nonchalant movement of wings.

The sweet wind ruffles the fountain's pool,
And the glow of the sun, seen through
The shade of the limes on the avenue,
Seems a fading blue in the twilight cool.

Deceivers exquisite, coquettes that charm,
Hearts tender but heedless of vows,
Chaffing delightfully, with mock bows,
Lover and loved one go arm in arm.

Now a hand, O so tiny, lets fall
A sharp slap one repays with a lip
Lightly pressed on the pink and white tip
Of a finger immeasurably small.

For this fault so excessive, uncouth,
One must suffer a look rather dry,
That quite strongly contrasts, by the by,
With the pardoning pout of the mouth.

## IN THE GROTTO

THERE! I'll kill myself at your feet,
For my distress is infinite,
And the terrible tigress of Hyrcania would be quite
A lamb beside you—prize so sweet!

Yes, indeed, thou cruel Clymene,
This sword that in many a combat
Has laid so many a Scipio and Cyrus flat,
Will end my life and all its bitter pain!

And yet, what need of it have I,
Who would descend to the Elysian Fields?
Love, pierced he not my heart with pointed steels
When first upon me fell your flashing eye?

## THE *INGÉNUS*

THE high heels battled with long skirts
And the uneven earth—a breeze unbid
Showing a shining limb, too often hid,—
And we, loving this play of flirts.

A zealous insect, darting, flies
To trouble the beauty 'neath the branches light;
And this lightning of necks, glowing and white,
Dazzled our youthful, foolish eyes.

Evening fell—a twilight of dim Fall;
The belles leaned on our arms, dreamy and slow,
Saying the words so startling and so low
Our souls since then have trembled to recall.

## CORTEGE

A MONKEY, beribboned and bland,
Goes skipping before with quick pace,
As she crumples a kerchief of lace
In the folds of her finely gloved hand.

While a small negro boy, very black,
Holds in his bare arms the long train
Of her robe, that he strives to maintain,—
Smoothing the wrinkles back.

The monkey cares naught but to gaze
Intent on the lady's white throat,
Whose contours, so dazzling, denote
A torso, godlike, of old days.

The negro boy, shy little wight,
Ofttimes lifts the train rather high
To gaze with mischievous eye
On that which he dreams of by night.

She goes on her way by the stair,
Unheeding the homage or gaze
Of these insolent beasts or their ways,
Disdaining to notice—or care.

## THE SHELLS

EACH shell, incrusted,
In the grotto where we knew love,
Has its peculiarity.

One has the purple of our souls
Robbed from the blood of our hearts,
When I burn and you take fire.

Another affects your languors
And your pallors when, wearily,
You turn from my half-mocking eyes.

This one counterfeits the grace
Of your ear, and that one
Your neck—pink, short, and plump.

But one amongst them troubles me.

## SKATING

YES, we were dupes, both you and I,
To have our intrigues for our pains.
Madame, such frenzy, by the by,
Was Summer mounting to our brains.

Spring had, however, I would say,
Served, if my memory be not slack,
To mystify our little play,
But in a fashion not so black!

For in the Spring the air is fresh,
And then the budding rose is sent;
And Love half opens to enmesh
With odors almost innocent.

In Spring the lilies, too, have thrown
Their pungent breath upon the morn;
And in the ardent sun is blown
This fresh excitant, newly born.

And then the mocking zephyrs bear
A heady strange effluvium,
That frees the heart from thoughts of care
And makes the anxious spirit numb.

That stirs to joy the senses five,
Transports us to the very skies;
All which alone does not contrive
To render us a bit more wise.

This was a time with skies all clear,
(Madame, do you recall those hours?)

The kisses given light as air
From souls as fresh as were the flowers.

Exempt from passion's foolish spell,
Unmoved by any transports vain,
How we enjoyed our days full well,
Our souls untroubled—without pain!

Ah, happy moments! Summer comes,—
Adieu, ye calm refreshing airs!
A heavy wind, voluptuous,
Invests our being, unawares.

And from each crimson cup the flowers
Ripe odors on us seem to shed;
While evil counsels fall in showers
Upon us from the boughs o'erhead.

And we acceded, this we know,
And played the comedy unfeigned;
This sort of foolish vertigo
That lasted while the dog star reigned.

Vain laughter—tears without a cause,
Yet with some pressing need how fraught!
Half-sadness—swooning without pause.
And what vague longing in the thought!

Autumn quite happily came by
With his cold days and breezes rude,
And in his manner brief and dry
Corrected our bad habitude.

And caused us, brusquely, too, I vow,
Each to assume a rule approved;
The guileless lover, I, and thou
The ever worthy well beloved. . .

Now Madame, Winter's here, and numb.
Each bettor trembles for his purse.
While here are other sleighs that come
And dare dispute with us the course.

Your two hands in the muff you've on,
Sit firm and safely in your place.
Away we go! and soon Fanchon
Will crown us victors in the race.

## FANTASTICS

SCARAMOUCHE and Pulcinella,
Met, by evil circumstance,
Gesticulate, their shadows on the moon.

However, the excellent doctor
Of Bologna gathers leisurely
Simples among brown herbs.

While his daughter, piquant beauty,
Under the elm boughs stealthily
Glides, half-nude, in quest

Of her beautiful pirate of Spain,
For whom the languorous nightingale
Proclaims the passion with head-splitting strain.

## CYTHERE

A LIGHT pavilion lends
Shelter where our gladness blends,
Fanned by the rose-trees, friends.

Odors of roses faint, wander—
Thanks to the summer wind astir,—
And mix with perfume come from her.

As her eyes foretold
Her heart is warm and her lips o'erbold
Bestow exquisite fevers, that they hold.

And Love crowns all complete
Save hunger, sherbet and sweet
Keeping the body's curves replete.

## AFLOAT

THE star of the shepherd trembles
In the black water, and the pilot
Searches the tinder box in his pockets.

This is the moment, Gentlemen, or never,
To be audacious, and I put
My two hands everywhere, henceforth.

The chevalier Atys, who scrapes
His guitar, to the ungrateful Chloris
Throws a saucy wink.

The abbé confesses in a low tone Églé.
And the viscount grows disorderly,
Giving the key of his heart to everyone.

However, the moon has arisen,
And the skiff in its brief course
Glides gayly o'er the waters that dream.

## THE FAUN

AN ancient faun of terra-cotta built
Laughs in the center of a plot of green,
Presaging without doubt some ill result
Of those dear moments of our life serene

That led me on and led you on, you old
Sad pilgrims with the melancholy mien,
Unto this hour whose flying footsteps bold
Go swirling to the sounding tambourine.

## MANDOLINE

THE singers of serenades,
And the beauties who listen,
Exchange the usual banter
Under the boughs that glisten.

This is Tircis and this Aminta,
This the eternal Clitander,
This is Damis that for many
A cruel one has made verses tender.

Their short vests of silk,
Their robes with glittering train,
Their elegance, their joy,
And their blue shadows, wane

In the ecstatic whirlwind
Of a moon pink and gray,
And the mandoline tinkling,
With the breezes at play.

## TO CLYMENE

MYSTIC barcarolles,
Romances without words,
Dear, since thine eyes
  Color of skies,

Since thy voice, strange
Visions that derange
And trouble the horizon
  Of my reason,

Since the aroma famed
Of thy pallor of the swan,
And since the candor
  Of thine odor,—

Ah, since all thy being,
Music that penetrates,
Halos from angels' tombs,
  Tones and perfumes,

Have on rich cadences
Of its correspondences
Induced my heart subtly,—
  So let it be!

## LETTER

WITHDRAW your eyes, Madame, for by the cares
Imperious (I take all the gods to witness)
I languish and I die, as is my custom
In like cases. And true, my heart is bitter,
Across the unrest your shadow brings,

Daily in my thoughts, in my dreams at night,
And, by night and by day, adorable, Madame!
Ah well, at last my body disappears,
And in its place my soul becomes a shade
That in its turn, amid emotions sad,
Embraces vain and numberless desires,
Is lost within your shadow for all time.

Till then, consider me your slave, my dear.

Madame, do all behave themselves with you?
Your parrot, cat, and dog? The society
Is it always pleasant, and this Silvanie
Whose black eye I had loved were yours not blue,
And who, sometimes, would make me signs, *parbleu!*
Is she the trusty friend she was of old?

Madame, an impatient project haunts me.
This is to conquer the whole earth with all
Its treasures rare, to put them at your feet—
Unworthy gage—to prove my love the peer
Of those most high and celebrated flames
Whose ardent hearts have lighted up the past!
Less loved was Cleopatra, by my faith,
Of Antony and Caesar, than you by me!
Do not doubt it, Madame. I would have fought
Like Caesar for a smile, O Cleopatra!
Like Antony, staked all upon a kiss.

Dear friend, adieu. Already too much talk.
One reads a letter in so short a space
It almost seems a waste of time to write.

## INDOLENTS

BAH! In spite of zealous destiny
Let's die together—shall we? You and I.
—The proposition's rare.

—The rare is good. Let's die, my own,
Like those in the Decameron!
—Ha! Ha! What lover! How bizarre!

—Bizarre, I do not know! But lover
Without guile, assuredly! Let's have it over—
Dying, if you wish—together!

—Sir, indeed you're far too bold,
And then you do not love, but talk of gold.
Let's just be still—if you would rather.

But Tircis and his Dorimene,
This evening sitting on the green
Near by a laughing rustic pair,

Made this unpardonable mistake
Of hindering death for love's dear sake.
Ha! Ha! What lovers! How bizarre!

## COLUMBINE

LEANDER, the fop,
Pierrot with a hop
That would,
Flea-like, clear a bush;
Cassandra 'neath her plush
Drawn hood;

And then Harlequin,
Rascal with a grin
Grotesque,
Costumed like a fool,
With glowing eyes that rule
His masque;

—Do, mi, sol, fa, mi,—
All these people flee,
Or worse;
Laugh and dance as well,
Before a saucy belle
Perverse,

Whose eyes malign
Like a cat's eyes shine,
Guarding the while
Her charms and crying "Down"—
"Paws down!" with a frown
And smile.

—These, they go perforce,
Sad, insipid course
Of stars.
Oh! Tell me toward
What fell, untoward
Disasters

The implacable child
Leads her beguiled
Young troupes?
With lifted skirt in hand,
Ah, whither with her band
Of dupes?

## THE FALLEN CUPID

THE wind the other night o'erturned the little Love
That, in the most mysterious corner of the park,
Mischievously bent his bow in the shadows dark
Where we two dreamed, while Love watched from above.

The wind the other night had thrown it low!
The marble broke and scattered. Ah, what shame
To see the pedestal and read the artist's name
Painfully, where trees their shadows throw.

Oh! it is sad to see this pedestal of stone
Standing so solitary, and in my dream
The melancholy thoughts that go and come, seem
To evoke a fatal future, drear and lone.

Oh! it is sad, but you, why are you gay,
Viewing this doleful sight with frivolous eye?
Amused to watch the purple butterfly
Above the ruin that obstructs the way.

## SOURDINE

CALM in the half-day
Where deep branches abound,
Let us mingle our love
With silence profound.

Let us melt our two souls
In ecstasy fine
With the vague languors
Of shrub and of pine.

Half close your eyes,
Cross your arms on your breast,
With the heart sleeping,
Peacefully rest.

Welcome the breathing wind
That is rippling so sweet
The waves of red grasses
That move at your feet.

And, when the dim twilight
Solemnly falls,
Voice of our sorrow
The nightingale calls.

## COLLOQUY SENTIMENTAL

IN the old park solitary and cold
They pass—two forms that loved of old.

Their eyes are dead and their lips are dumb,
If they speak, none hears the words that come.

In the old park solitary and vast
Two specters have evoked the past.

—Do you remember our old love?—Yet,
Why wish me to recall it? I forget.

—Your heart beats only to my name? this would I know.
And do you see my soul in dreams?—No!

—Ah, the good days—the joy unspeakable—
When our young lips were met.—It's possible.

—Oh, they were blue, the heavens, and hope was high!
—Now hope has vanished, toward the blackened sky.

Thus through the tangled weeds they walk,
And save the night alone, none hears them talk.

# THE GOOD SONG

## *(LA BONNE CHANSON)*

## I

THE morning sun makes warm and golden, too,
The wheat and rye still wet with early dew.
The heavens keep their freshness of the night.
One wanders out, no other task in sight,
Save by the river's tossing sedge of gold
To trace a grassy path 'neath alders old.
The air is fresh. A bird goes flitting by,
Some hedge-fruit in its beak or wisp of rye.
And in the stream its shadow follows fast.
Naught else.

The dreamer loves this landscape vast,
For the soft light has suddenly caressed
His dream of happiness and blessed
The charming memories a maiden brings;
Vision in white that scintillates and sings.
And what he dreams perhaps would make one smile—
The sweet Companion he has found at last,
Whose soul his soul weeps for as days go past.

## II

ALL grace and all light,
In the flush of her sixteen years,
She has the innocence bright
Of a child without fears.

Her eyes are full of youthful fire,
Innocent yet wise, that nothing miss;
Awakening the strange desire
Of an immaterial kiss.

Her hand, so little and so light,
A humming bird within it could not hide,
Captures, without hope of flight,
The heart in secret, short of pride.

She is intelligent as well;
And with a noble soul to meet all need.
As pure as she is spiritual.
And what she says 'twere well to heed.

If sometimes foolish jokes amuse,
And make her laugh with heartless glee;
Yet will she be—herself a Muse—
Forgiving to the point of amity;

Even to the point of love—who knows? Maybe,
Out of regard for a poor bard with pleading eyes,
Who begs, beneath her window, as you see—
Audacious one!—a worthy prize.

Indeed, of his song good or bad!
Yet, proof sincere, whose every look reveals
Without false shame or heart unduly sad,
The sweet discomfort that a lover feels.

## III

IN her ruche-bordered dress of green and gray,
One day in June when I was full of care,
She came before my eyes, quick smiling, fair,—
I who admired, nor feared her ambush gay.

She came and went, returned a while, and spoke—
Delicate and grave, ironical and tender;
And on my soul so full of visions somber,
A ray from her all joyous presence broke.

Her voice that was so musical and low,
Went hand in hand with her sweet spirit, bold
Yet guileless, when her charming babble told
A heart as gay as good, one might well know.

And thus was I—though I would fain dissemble
With a revolt, put instantly away—
In this small Fairy's power, who since that day
I supplicate in fear and even—tremble!

## IV

SINCE dawn awoke and sunrise now is here,
Since having flown so long hope turns at last
And flies toward me who called through all the year;
Since all this joy is mine, and sorrow past,—

O let me now forget the bitter thought,
The evil dreams, be they forever gone.
The irony my scornful lips had caught,
The cruel words my spirit dwelt upon.

Away with fist tight-clenched and anger's sway
That rose against the fools we daily pass;
Away with spite abominable—away
Forgetfulness found in the fateful glass!

For 'tis my wish—now that a Soul of light
Has in my night profound thrown its soft rays
Of early love, immortal as 'tis bright,
By favor of her smiles and graceful ways,—

It is my wish, such light her fair eye hath,
But to be led by her, what e'er forebodes;
To walk upright along the mossy path
When rocks and gravel strew the beaten roads.

I wish to walk straightforward now through Life,
My task in view, nor stepping once aside;
Without remorse or envy, without strife,
Nor fearing aught, with Her close at my side.

And I will sing my songs along the route—
To shorten the rough road they will suffice.
She, too, will listen, pleased without a doubt,
And truly this will be my Paradise.

## V

BEFORE thou takest flight, pale
Star of dawn sublime,
—A thousand quail
Singing, singing in the thyme.

Turn toward the poet, mark
His eyes how full of love;
—The lark
Mounts to the sky above.

Turn, thy loving glance employ,
It drowns the dawn in blue;
—What joy
Amidst the ripe wheat wet with dew!

And make my thoughts to shine
Yonder, O far away!
—How fine
The dew that glistens on the hay.

In the sweet troubled dream, so chaste
Of my dear sleeping one. . .
—Haste, haste,
For here's the golden sun.

VI

THE white moon
Shines in the wood;
From each branch
Comes a voice
Under the boughs. . .

O well-beloved.

The pool reflects,
Profound mirror,
The silhouette
Of the black willow
Where the wind weeps. . .

Dream on, this is the hour.

A vast and tender
Peacefulness
Seems to descend
From the firmament
That a star tints. . .

This is the exquisite hour.

VII

THE landscape from the curtained window square
Speeds swiftly past while all the wide plains wear,
With the water, the wheat, the trees, and sky,
An aspect strange—a whirlpool rushing by;
The telegraph's slim poles go tilting o'er,
With all their wires quite like a music score.

A smell of burning coal and hissing steam.
A noise as of a thousand chains that seem
To bind a thousand giants, lashed, that howl;
And then the long-drawn hooting, like an owl.

Ah, what to me all this, since in my eyes
And joyous heart a white-robed vision lies;
Since her sweet voice for me resounds once more,
And since a Name, well loved, blends with the roar
Like a smooth pivot that might well reproach
The brutal rumble of the noisy coach.

## VIII

A SAINT in her bright halo,
A châtelaine in her tower;
All that the human word may know
Of grace and love's sweet power.

The note of golden splendor
Of a horn in woodland ways,
Linked with pride, deep and tender,
Of queens of other days.

With this the glowing sense
Of triumph when she smiled;
The blush—the swan-like innocence—
Half woman and half child.

Face pearl and pink, that brings
To mind some fair patrician dame:
I see, I hear all these proud things
In her Carlovingian name.

## IX

HER right arm, in a gesture amiable and sweet,
Reposes about the neck of her little sister,
While her left arm follows the rhythm of her skirt.
Truly, a happy thought seems to possess her mind,
For her eyes so fresh and her mouth that smiles
Witness a joy that mingles with her spirit.
Oh, her thought, exquisite and fine! what is it?
How beautiful, how lovable, and how good!
For this portrait her infallible taste has chosen
The most simple pose, also the very best.
Standing, the look straight, bare-headed; and her dress
Just long enough in this that it discloses
A trifle, 'neath its jealous folds, the charming tip
Of a foot maliciously imperceptible.

## X

FIFTEEN long days to come and six weeks gone
Already! Among human agonies
The saddest of them all is to be far.
One writes, repeats his love; or has a care
To evoke each day, gesture, voice and eyes
Of her on whom his happiness relies.
To talk alone with her in dumb appeals.
But all one thinks, and all the things one feels,
And all his words, thus spoken, grave or glad,
Persist in seeming colorless and sad.

Oh! absence! most inclement of all ills!
Consoling one's self with the phrase that thrills,
And then to dip the sad depths of one's thought
For comfort and to find all there is naught,
Hope-sick to draw up only bitter things!

Then, hard and cold, a barbed iron that stings,
Swifter than bird or bullet or the thin
Sharp south sea wind tipped with a fish's fin,
Here comes, like to an arrow, the suspicion
Shot by the archer Doubt, the evil one.

And is this true? as touched by haunting fears,
I read her letter, my eyes full of tears.
Her letter, with the sweet avows it brings;
Is she not then distraught by other things?
Who knows? While time for me, slow and morose,
Flows like a stream along its muddy course,
Perhaps her mouth a happy smile begets,—
Perhaps she may be glad—perhaps—forgets?
And I re-read her letter. Vague regrets!

## XI

THIS hard proof soon will have an end,
Smile, O my heart—your fortunes mend.

Now they are passed, the days of fears,
When I was sad—sad unto tears.

Count not the moments, O my soul,
Time yet must take a little toll.

The bitter words, I've killed them all,
Dark specters banished past recall.

My eyes like weary exiles are
That only see her from afar;

My ears are hungry but to hear
Her golden voice so soft and clear;

And all my being, all my love,
My only thought and dream doth move

Me to acclaim the happy day
When I shall see my *fiancée!*

## XII

GO, song, on wings wind-blown,
And tell her with thy art:
A joyous light has shown
Within my faithful heart.

Cast out with sainted ray,
Love's shadows all have fled;
Within my heart is day,
Pride, fear, and doubt, are dead.

Long silent, dumb, and dark,
Hearest thou? The gladness rings
Like the swift-winged lark
That in the clear sky sings.

Go then, my song, today,
Thy voice she'll not disdain.
Welcomed, she'll bid thee stay,
Since you return again.

## XIII

AS yesterday they talked, our elders wise,
My eyes kept ever seeking your dear eyes;

And your soft glance was often toward me thrown
The while the stupid talk flowed gravely on.

Beneath the banal sense of phrases caught,
My errant love kept ever near your thought;

And when you spoke, as though without design,
My quick ear caught your secret—that was mine.

For the voice, like the eyes of This that makes
You sad or joyous, a dear secret takes

And, spite of every effort you essay,
Gives your emotions to the light of day.

Now, yesterday I parted, drunken quite:
Is this a vain hope that my heart holds tight,

A vain hope, false and sweet—fain would I know?
Nay, nay, it is not so—it is not so!

## XIV

THE fireside and the lamplight's level ray,
Dreaming, hand raised to brow at close of day;
Eyes that in eyes beloved their image see;
Hour when the books are closed and steams the tea.
Sweetness to feel, at last the evening o'er,
The charmed fatigue and waiting we adore
Of nuptial shadows and of the sweet night.
Oh! All these joys my tender dreams invite
Without release, though vain delay bespeaks,
Mad of the months and furious of the weeks.

## XV

ALMOST I fear, if truth be said,
So much my life becomes enlaced
With that all radiant thought that graced
My soul, the summer that has fled;

So fast your image, dear, I own,
Lives in this heart that's all for you;
My heart uniquely jealous, too,
To love and please but you alone.

Grant me your pardon, if in awe,
I frankly speak as though you heard,
To think that but a smile—a word
From you henceforth must be my law;

That it sufficeth but a sign,
A word, a trembling of an eye,
To put my joy forever by,
Take my illusions so divine.

And still I would not see thee, thence—
The future is too somber hued,
With pains all numberless imbued,
Yet, ever through a hope immense,

Plunged in a joy supremely due,
I say again and always say,
In spite of every mournful way:
That I love you—that I love you!

## XVI

THE noise of taverns and the black mud of the sidewalks,
The torn leaves fluttering in the wintry air;
The omnibus, a storm of rusty iron and mud
That creaks, unpleasantly, on its four grinding wheels
And rolls its slowly burning eyes of green and red;
The workmen going to their clubs and smoking each
His short clay pipe 'neath the very nose of the police;
The dripping roofs, the sweating walls, the slippery walks,
The asphalt bulging and the filthy, muddy rills;
Such is my route—and at the end is paradise.

## XVII

IS it not so? Despite what others say,
Who merely envy us our present joys,
We two will go with humble pride our way.

Is it not so? We take the modest path,
Happy and slow, that smiling Hope employs,
Unmindful of the ways the cold world hath.

Lost in our love, as in some leafy dell,
Our hearts will be in their deep tenderness
Two nightingales that sing the day farewell.

As for the World, though it be fair or dark,
What matters it? Perhaps it may caress,
Perhaps in harming take us for the mark.

And thus united by the ties most dear,
Clad in an armor that can all withstand,
We two shall smile and, smiling, nothing fear.

Unmindful save of what the Fates bestow,
We two shall walk our pathway hand in hand,
With that high hope and youthful soul aglow

Of those who truly love—is it not so?

## XVIII

THESE stormy times serve to remind
That marriage of the souls should bind
Our hearts in happy unison.
  And in this hour of sad unrest
  'Twill put our courage to the test
To bear life's burdens one by one.

And, facing this, 'twere well we two
Strive but to keep this thought in view:
To hold ourselves, thrice happy pair,
  In ways upright, conduct austere,
  So that our love shall always wear
A proud and a defiant air.

Why should I speak of this meanwhile?
O thou the goodness—thou the smile!
Hast thou not counsel, too, that ranks
  O'er mine—most loyal, strong and brave?
  Whose laughter mocks my visage grave,
And still to whom my heart cries: Thanks!

## XIX

SO, it shall be a day of summer, dear,
The glowing sun, accomplice of my joy,
His rays, 'mid silks and satin, will employ
To make your beauty still more rare, more clear.

The far blue sky outspread like some high tent,
Shall tremble sumptuously in lengthening folds
Above our happy brows whose pallor holds
Expectancy, with joy and gladness blent.

And when the evening comes with its sweet air
That loves to play, caressing, in your veils,
The peaceful stars that rise above the dales
Will smile upon the happy wedded pair.

## XX

I WENT by paths where danger hides,
  Uncertain windings, far withdrawn;
But your dear hands were my sole guides.

If o'er the eastern sky was drawn
  One feeble glow of coming day,
Your glance made morning of the dawn.

No noise to cheer the traveler's way,
  Save his slow footsteps, sounding far.
Your voice said: "Courage—and away."

My fearful heart no longer gay
Wept with me on the road, alas!
But love, delicious vanquisher,

Our joyful meeting brought to pass.

## XXI

WINTER has gone: the balmy light indeed
Dances, from earth unto the heavens clear.
Oh! well may the heart the most sad accede
To the immense joy scattered in the air.

Even this Paris wearisome and ill,
Seems to acclaim the young suns that unfold,
And with a mighty welcome's joyous thrill
Extends a thousand arms from roofs of gold.

I've had, a year, the springtime in my soul,
This green return of flowers so sweet to feel,
As though a flame about a flame might roll,
Has put for me ideal on ideal.

The blue sky is more vast and high, and crowns
The air immutable where laughs my love;
How all is fair and how my path abounds
With hopes that have their turn—hopes born above.

Let summer come, and autumn that awaits
Winter's return! Each season in its way
Will charming be, O Thou who decorates
The fantasy and motive of this lay!

# ROMANCES WITHOUT WORDS

## *(ROMANCES SANS PAROLES)*

THE PROMENADE

## FORGOTTEN AIRS

### I

*Le vent dans la plaine*
*Suspend son haleine.*

(Favart.)

THIS is the languorous ecstasy,
This is the amorous fatigue,
This is the wood that rejoices,
When, in the hush of the breeze
Sings from the trembling trees
The choir of little voices.

O the frail and fresh murmur,
This warble growing firmer,
This resembles the sweet cry
Of the wind-shaken grass,
Or, under the waters that pass,
The slow turning pebbles' low sigh.

And this soul that laments
Plaintive—intense,
Is this not ours, filled with care?
Is this not mine, say, and thine,
This sad anthem divine,
Humble and low on the air?

### II

I VAGUELY guess, across a murmur drawn,
The sound of voices, long since still, alas!
And in this glimmer, fair musicians pass,
And love, the symbol of a future dawn.

And soul and heart, that blend in mad desire,
Seem like an eye that has a vision double,
Where trembles, on a weary day of trouble,
The haunting tune of every poet's lyre.

O death—this death that must alone endure,
This love that goes in fear that once was ours.
The young hours balancing with the old hours,
And dying, gently swinging, slow and sure!

## III

*Il pleut doucement sur la ville.*
(Arthur Rimbaud.)

IT weeps in my heart
As it rains on the town.
What is this languor
That weighs my heart down?

Soft drip of the rain
On the roofs and the ground,
For a heart that is weary
O sweet is the sound!

It weeps without right
And heart-sick is my song.
What! Is there no treason?
This sorrow is wrong!

And, knowing not why,
It is well the worst pain,
Without love or hate
That my heart has such pain.

## V

*Son joyeux, importun, d'un clavecin sonore.* (Petrus Borel.)

THE piano, kissed by a hand soft and frail,
Shines vaguely in the twilight pink and gray.
Whilst lightly as a bird's wing, in a dale,
An old tune, very feeble, sweet and gay,
Circles discretely, ere its faint notes fail,
The room perfumed by Her since that far day.

What is this sudden rocking in my heart—
This stirring of my inmost soul profound?
What wouldst thou of me? ghostly song thou art!
What is thy wish, thou sweet uncertain sound,
That, dying, seeks the window to depart—
The garden window, open near the ground?

## VI

BEHOLD the dog of Jean Nivelle
That snaps beneath the sentry's eye
The cat of the good dame Michel—
François-les-bas-bleus laughs to cry.

While for the public scribe's concern,
The moon her misty light lets fall,
Where Angelique with Medor turn
To deepest green on their old wall.

Here comes La Ramée, a bold knight,
Who swears as a King's soldier will.
Beneath his coat, ill-famed and white,
His heart no joy could ever fill

Because the bakeress . . . —She? For shame!
  Bernant Lustucru, her old man,
Has often crowned, betimes, her flame . . .
  Children, *Dominus vobiscum!*

Hold! In her long robe all in blue,
  That makes frou-frou in satin clear,
This is a courtesan—*parbleu!*
  'Twere well that you should praise her chair.

Be he philosopher or knave,
  This gold in heaps doth make one cross;
Such riches, insolent, might pave
  The world with notes by Monsieur Loss!

Stop, you rascal, hold your place, you
  Little shopman, little abbé, gay;
Little bard who ever tries to woo
  The rhyme that always goes astray!

However, here's the night at hand . . .
  And never weary all the day
With being innocent and bland,
  François-les-bas-blues still is gay.

## VII

HOW sad—how sad my heart today,
Because of One so far away.

For me, no balm can e'er console,
Who made an exile of my soul.

For me whose soul, for me whose heart,
Willed we should ever live apart.

For me, no balm can e'er console,
Who made an exile of my soul.

My heart so sensitive, so miserable,
Said to my soul: Can it be possible?

Is't possible—said it, the while—
This proud exile, this sad exile?

My soul said to my heart: Know I,
Myself, whence comes this snare, or why;

To be with her, yet an exile,
And long, long gone from her the while?

## VIII

In the interminable
Weariness of the land
The uncertain snow
Shines like the sand.

The sky is of copper,
Its light is a swoon,
I seem to see living
And dying the moon.

Like floating gray clouds
In the wood lying near,
The mist-shrouded oaks
Of the forest appear.

The sky is of copper,
Its light is a swoon,
I seem to see living
And dying the moon.

You broken-voiced crow,
You meager wolves, too,
In the bitter north wind
What will happen to you?

In the interminable
Weariness of the land
The uncertain snow
Shines like the sand.

## IX

*The nightingale from the height of a branch, looking down, thinks to have fallen in the river. He is at the summit of an oak, yet hath he fear of drowning.*

(Cyrano de Bergerac.)

THE shadow of trees in the vaporous stream, fog-kissed,
Fading, dies like the mist;
Whilst in the shady depths of the real branches, above,
Mourns and complains the dove.

How in this landscape vague, O traveler pale,
Thou too art mirrored, frail;
Whilst in the highest leaves, with mournful sound,
Sadly thy hopes are drowned!

## BELGIAN LANDSCAPES

*"Conquestes du Roy"*
*(Vieilles estampes).*

### WALCOURT

O THE charming
Bricks and tiles!
For the lovers,
Little aisles.

Hops and vines,
Leaves and flowers.
For frank drinkers,
Shady bowers.

Beer and clamors,
Taverns clear;
To all smokers
Servants dear.

Gay highroads
And stations near.
Good wandering Jews,
What cheer, what cheer!

### CHARLEROI

IN the black grass
The Kobolds go.
The wind profound
Must weep, I know.

What is this scent?
The oats whistle,
And bush and thistle
Strike those who pass.

More hovels than
Fine homes, 'tis said.
What horizons
Of forges red!

What does one smell?
The depots thunder,
The eyes wonder,
Where's Charleroi?

Sinister odors!
Ah, what is this,
Like a sistrum's
Noisy kiss?

Hold your breath!
Now all is brutal!
The sweat of men—
The cries of metal!

In the black grass
The Kobolds go.
The wind profound
Must weep, I know.

## BRUSSELS

### Simple Frescos

I

THE flight is verdant and pink
Of the fences and hills;
In the twilight the lamp fills
Our coach with a blur indistinct.

A light in the valley still clings,
Sweetly gilding the copse;
Some little shrubs without tops
Where a feeble bird sings.

Sad, in a mild way, the burning
Touch of Autumn there;
And my old languors, returning,
Are cradled on the air.

II

THE pathway runs on without end
Yonder where the heavens blend
Over this sweet glade.
Do you know that it would be
Good to lie beneath this tree
In the secret shade?

Some gentlemen in careful dress—
Who they are one well might guess,
Friends without a doubt

Of the Royer-Collards—go
On their way toward the château.
Would it were my route!

The old château is all in white,
With, at its side, the somber light
Of the setting sun.
Fields around. . . Here all is blest,
Oh! that here our love could nest
When our day is done.

Café of the Young Fox,
August, 1872.

## HORSES OF WOOD

*Par Saint-Gille,*
*Viens-nous-en,*
*Mon agile*
*Alezan.*

(V. Hugo.)

TURN, turn, wooden horses, turn.
Turn a hundred times—a thousand times—
The hautboy sounds, the music chimes—
Turn, turn, wooden horses, turn!

The nurses fat—the soldiers gay—
Go whirling round with happy smile;
In Cambre's wood this is the style:
Two masters for each prancing bay.

Turn, horses of their heart, turn round;
For here the watching sharper stands
With twinkling eye and cunning hands;
Turn to the piston's boastful sound.

It makes one tipsy thus to spin
On horses with such crazy tread;
Upsets your stomach and your head,
Both good and bad, without, within.

Turn, wooden horses, speed away.
No need to use the spurs on you
To make you gallop, two by two;
Turning without the hope of hay.

Haste, horses of their soul, for here
The twilight deepens into night;
And dove and pigeon will unite
Far from madame and from the fair.

Turn, turn, the sky in velvet sheen
And golden stars is slowly dressed;
The lover's parting kiss is pressed—
Turn to the sounding tambourine.

## MALINES

THE winds that toward the meadows fly,
Would pick a quarrel with the vanes
Upon the roof of purple slate—
The château of some magistrate—
How pleasing to the traveler's eye!

Like scenes from fairyland we pass
Where ash-trees form a leafy bower—
And, outlined on the distant plain,
Are vast Saharas of ripe grain,
Alfalfa, clover and white grass.

Our train, that speeds in silence, flies
Along the peaceful shady lanes.

The cattle sleep. Repose, sweet kine,
Where the wide plain extends its line
Beneath the vaguely tinted skies.

We glide, without a murmur, on;
Each coach is like a chamber, where
One speaks low . . . and looking through
The window we enjoy this view,
Made to the wish of Fénelon.

## WATER COLORS

### GREEN

HERE are the fruits, flowers, leaves, and branches meet;
And then here is my heart for your delight.
Oh, tear it not with your white hands so sweet;
I would these humble gifts might charm your sight.

I come to you, my fever-heated brow
Swept by the morning wind, all wet with dew.
Oh, at your feet my weary form allow,
There but to rest and there to dream by you.

On your young breast let rest my aching head
That rings with your last kisses, warmly pressed;
Until the tempest pass, on that fair bed,
Oh, let me sleep a little, while you rest.

### SPLEEN

THE roses were all red
And the ivy was all black.

Dear, if you but turn your head,
All my despairs come back.

The sky was too blue—too tender,
The sea too green and the air sweet, too.

I fear always—ah, to wait and wonder!
What flight atrocious of you.

I am tired of hollies green,
Of the box-tree and the yew,

Of the landscape's distant sheen,
And of all, alas, save you.

## Streets

### I

LET'S dance a jig!

Always I love her pretty eyes,
More clear than starlight in the skies,
What haunting mischief in them lies!

Let's dance a jig!

She has a fashion quite apart,
To disconcert a lover's heart,
And with a truly charming art!

Let's dance a jig!

But I find better this, the power
Of kisses on her mouth in flower,
Since she is dead to me this hour.

Let's dance a jig!

Ah, I remember the old days,
Those hours, and all her gracious ways.
This is the best, that with me stays.

Let's dance a jig!

# WISDOM

*(SAGESSE)*

## VII

THE false fair days that shone all day, my weary soul,
Now come to vibrate in the copper-colored West.
Go, close thine eyes, poor soul, and seek at once thy rest.
Fly from temptation's snare. The infamies unroll.

All day they burned in long red streaks of fiery hail,
Beating to earth the grapes upon the hills nearby;
Cut down the valley's harvest, ravished the clear sky—
The blue, the singing sky that bideth thee avail.

Turn pale and get you home with folded hands. What sorrows!
If all our yesterdays should eat our good tomorrows?
If the old folly were again to seek us out?

These memories of sins long past, need must I slay?
They make a final charge, the most supreme, no doubt.
Oh, go and pray against the storm. Go thou and pray!

## IX

WISDOM of Louis Racine, how I envy it.
O, not to have followed the lessons of Rollin.
Or been born in the century in its decline
When the radiant, setting sun made life so fit.

When Maintenon threw upon France with shadows sweet,
The peace of her bonnets of linen, white and fine.

When the friendless were sheltered in a spirit benign,
When study was followed, and prayer, as it were meet.

When poet and doctor simply and honestly
Communed with the fervor of humble novices,
Serving at Mass and singing the offices.

And, the springtime come, having care only
To go in Auteuil to gather lilies and roses—
Like Garo, praising God, who all disposes.

## X

NO! 'Twas Gallican—Jansenist—this century glad!
Toward the Middle Ages, enormous and delicate.
I would my weary heart in grief might navigate
Far from these days of carnal joy and pleasures sad.

King, politician, monk, artisan and chemist;
The architect, soldier, doctor and advocate.—
What time! O that my shipwrecked heart, once more elate,
Might feel this ardent supple force, so sadly missed!

And there that I had part, in some way, with the kings;
Or elsewhere, no matter, save the thing were vital;
That I were as a saint and good, thinking high things,

In that great moral time of high theology,
Guided by the unique folly of the Cross,
Upon your wings of rock, O foolish Cathedral!

## II

### I

O MY God, thou hast wounded me with love,
And the wound is vibrating still:
O my God, thou hast wounded me with love.

O my God, I am stricken with thy fear,
And the burn that quivers is yet here:
O my God, I am stricken with thy fear.

O my God, I have known that all is vile,
And thy glory in me is installed:
O my God, I have known that all is vile.

Drown my soul in the floods of thy Wine,
Found my life in the Bread of thy table:
Drown my soul in the floods of thy Wine.

Here is my blood that I have not poured,
Here is my flesh unworthy of suffering:
Here is my blood that I have not poured.

Here is my forehead that only has blushed,
For a stool for Thy feet adorable:
Here is my forehead that only has blushed.

Here are my hands that have not toiled,
For the ardent coals and the incense rare:
Here are my hands that have not toiled.

Here is my heart that has beat but in vain,
To palpitate on the thorns of Calvary:
Here is my heart that has beat but in vain.

Here are my feet, frivolous voyagers,
To run to the cry of thy grace:
Here are my feet, frivolous voyagers.

Here is my voice, noise shameful and lying,
For the reproaches of Penitence:
Here is my voice, noise shameful and lying.

Here are my eyes, lighted with error,
To be put out by tears and prayers:
Here are my eyes, lighted with error.

Alas, Thou, God of oblation and pardon,
What is the depth of mine ingratitude!
Alas, Thou, God of oblation and pardon.

God of terror and God of sanctity,
Alas, this black abyss of my crime:
God of terror and God of sanctity.

Thou, God of peace, of joy, and of happiness,
All my fears, all my ignorance:
Thou, God of peace, of joy, and of happiness.

Thou knowest all this, all this,
And that I am poorer than any one.
Thou knowest all this, all this.

But this that I am, my God, I give you.

## III

III

HOPE shines as doth a wisp of straw in the stable.
Why fearest thou the drunken wasp's wild foolish flight?

See, the sun powders through the chink a ray of light.
And sleepest thou, thine elbow on the table?

Poor soul, this water from deep icy depths unlocked,
Drink thou. Then sleep again. Thou seest how I wait,
And I will lull the dreams of thy *siésta* late,
Singing a lullaby as to an infant rocked.

Noon sounds. Forgive me, Madame, but your departure take.
He sleeps. Strange, what a sound a woman's footsteps make
Resounding in the brain of poor, unhappy men.

Noon sounds. I have sprinkled water in the chamber.
Go, sleep. Hope shines like pebbles in a somber fen.
Ah, when shall bloom again the roses of September?

## IV

*Caspar Hauser sings:*

SEE, a calm orphan, I am come
Rich only in my tranquil eyes,
Toward men who live in great cities:
Nor am I evil born, as some.

At twenty years new pain to bear,
Under love's flame most dutiful,
I found the women beautiful
But they did not find me fair.

So that, not having land or king,
And braver than my love unhealed,
I wished to die on war's red field,
But death passed by so slight a thing.

Am I too early born, or late?
What has the world for me to do?
My pain is deep—O, all of you,
Pray for poor Gaspard and his fate.

## V

A GREAT weariness
Falls on my life:
Sleep, all hope,
Sleep, all strife!

I see nothing more.
I lose the memory
Of bad and of good. . .
O the sad history!

I am a cradle
A hand may balance
In a black cave. . .
Silence, silence!

## VI

THE sky is just beyond the roof
So blue, so calm;
A tree-top just beyond the roof
Rocks its slow palm.

The chime in the sky that I see
Distantly rings;
A bird on the tree that I see
Plaintively sings.

My God, my God, but life is there,
Tranquil and sweet;
This peaceful murmur that I hear
Comes from the street!

What have you done, you who stand here,
In tears and ruth?
Say, what have you done, you who are here,
With your lost youth?

## VII

I KNOW not why
My bitter spirit,
With troubled wing and mad flies o'er the sea;
Dreams that to me are dear,
On frightened pinions fly,
My love beats on the billows. Why, O why?

Gull, with melancholy flight,
My sad thought follows the sea.
Balanced when the storm winds flee;
Dipping o'er the hollows white.
Gull, with melancholy flight.

Drunk with the sun
And liberty,
An instinct guides it onward o'er the deep.
The summer breezes free,
O'er the crimson waves, each one,
Carry it softly in a warm half-sleep.

Sad, with what sadness it cries!
The distant pilot, listening, fears.
It floats, dives, and disappears,
Then with a wounded wing will rise
To wheel—and then more sadly cries.

I know not why
My bitter spirit
With troubled wing so mad flies o'er the sea;
Dreams that to me are dear,
On frightened pinions fly,
My love beats on the billows. Why, O why?

## IX

THE sound of a horn sobs toward the wood,
An orphan strain that wanders at will,
Coming and dying under the hill,
Where soft winds sigh in an errant mood.

The soul of a wolf weeps in this strain,
That mounts to the slowly setting sun;
And sorrow and pleasure blend as one
In a ravishing tune with a sad refrain.

And to heighten this languorous plaint,
In long white streaks, like arrows of lint,
From a crimson sky falls the silent snow.

And the strain has the air of a sigh
Of autumn, so soft it seems and low,
Across the sleeping landscape sadly spent.

## X

OUR bodies—how they make my heart expand
With languorous pity and compassion deep!
Ah! Always when in somber depths of sleep,
The covers stripe the skin—oppress the hand.

Peeved at the fevers of returning day;
Your body warm with sweat that slowly dries—

A bird, half wakened, trembling ere it flies—
And O, your feet, how weary of the way!

The breast—marked by a heavy striking fist!
The mouth—still reddened by the cruel blow!
The flesh—a frail and quaking piece of show!

The eyes—poor lovely eyes that have not missed
The sadness of the end they have surmised!
Sad body! O how weak and how chastised!

## XIII

LONG rows of hedges stretch away
In fleecy cloud-forms toward the sky,
White as the mist slow drifting by.
How sweetly smells the growing bay!

Some trees and mills in proper place,
That barely touch the tender green;
And here the playful colts are seen
That swiftly o'er the meadows race.

In this vague Sabbath, calm and light,
Here are the sheep, also at play;
The strong, large sheep in white array,
And gentle as their fleece is white.

And now comes, bursting from on high,
A flood of sound rolled in volutes,
From chiming bells that sound like flutes
Upon the glowing milk-white sky.

## XV

THE sea is fairer
Than cathedrals are;
A tender nurse
That soothes when all things mar.
The sea where prays
Our virgin queen, Marie!

She has the gifts
So terrible and sweet.
She pardons all
When cruel billows beat.
This vast expanse
Is full of kindly ways.

How patient, too,
When the loud tempest rings.
A friendly breath
Upon the water sings:
All ye who hope
In vain, die without pain.

Then, 'neath the skies,
A vast expanse of sheen,
How blue she is!
Pink, gray and living green—
Fairest of all,
And better far than we.

# OF OLD AND RECENTLY

## *(JADIS ET NAGUÈRE)*

## OF OLD

### Prologue

BEGONE—vile troupe!
  Damned children, off with you!
  These leisures are your due,—
The Chimera lends her croup.

Run, climbing on her back,
  As swarms a flight of dreams
  That to a sick man seems
Flowers on his curtains black.

This moist hand that is mine,
  Feeble, again, but at last
  Without fever (that has passed!)
Moves with an aid divine.

My hands bless you, little cares,—
  Little flies of my black sun
  And my white nights.—Run,
Fly quickly, little despairs!

Little joys, hopes, sad ways,
  That only yesterday
  Left me for other preys. . .
Go, *ægri somnia!*

## PIERROT

*To Léon Valade.*

AH, this is not the moon-struck dreamer here,
That used to rail his forbears, o'er the door.
His joy, quite like his candle, is no more.—
Today his specter haunts us, thin and clear.

And now where flashing lightning takes its flight,
His pale blouse has the air as of a shroud;
With mouth agape, he seems to shriek aloud
Against the gnawing worm that holds him quite.

And with the flapping of some bird of night,
He makes with sleeves that flutter long and white,
The foolish signs none answer from the earth.

His eyes are holes that burn with sulphurous flame,
And frightful are the powdered cheeks that frame
The bloodless face and pointed nose of death.

## KALEIDOSCOPE

*To Germain Nouveau*

IN a street in the heart of a village of dreams,
This shall seem as long since, when one lived in the past:
For an instant quite vague and yet gripping one fast. . .
Oh, this sun through the rising mist darting its beams!

Oh, this cry on the sea and this voice in the wood!
This shall seem as though all lay afar from one's range;
An awakening slowly from cycles of change
And with all clearer shown and with all understood

In this street in the heart of the magical town,
Where the organs at dusk grind the jigs with a sweep,
Where cafés shall have cats on the dressers asleep,
And the bands of musicians stroll noisily down;

Yet so sad will this seem as almost to benumb,
With the tears flowing warm that the cheek softly feels,

With the laughter that sobs in the noise of the wheels—
Invocations that rise to the deaths yet to come;

With the words very old, like bouquets pale and dead;
Where the noise of the public dance rings to arouse;
And the widows with copper bound close to their brows—
All these peasants that cut through the crowd that is led

To stroll there, and who talk with the youthful blackguards,—
With the old men all marked with a shameful disease,—
However, not far in the by-path one sees
From some public fête rise the bursting petards.

And all this, as though dreaming, one wakens to see,
And then sleeping again falls to dreaming alway
Of the selfsame enchantment, the selfsame display,—
Summer—the grass—noise moiré of the flight of a bee.

## INTERIOR

WITH large and somber folds an ample tapestry
Descending with a sheer and stately emphasis
Along the four great walls of a retreat—abyss
Mysterious of shadows wed with luxury.

Old furniture and dazzling stuffs that faded be;
An ancient bed, half-seen, and vague as a regret;
And over all the seal of age and secret set—
Some allegory through whose depths one cannot see.

No pictures, books,—no piano or blossoms light;
Only in the deep gloom upon the cushions, dumb,
A ghostly woman sitting, clad in blue and white,

Who sadly smiles—witness disquieting—where join
Slow echoes of a song, epithalamium,
In an obsession made of musk and of benzoin.

## ART OF POETRY

*To Charles Morice*

CHOOSE the music before all things,
And for this the Uneven prefer;
More vague, more soluble in the air,
With nothing that weighs or that clings.

Also, one should fail not to choose
His words in a contemptuous way.
Nothing is more dear than a song gray,
Where the Indecisive and the Precise fuse.

This, the bright eyes behind the veils.
This, the full day trembling at noon.
This, the warm autumn sky aswoon,
Or when the blue starry host prevails.

For we wish but the Nuance to adorn,
Not Color, nothing but vagueness and cloud.
Oh! The Nuance alone, betrothed, endowed—
Dream to the dream, flute to the horn!

Shun the Epigram, the assassin,
The cruel Wit and the Laugh impure;
For the Heavens weep, nor will endure
This vile garlic from the kitchen.

Take Eloquence and wring its neck,
And 'twill strengthen your verse often-time
To hold in leash the enterprising Rhyme
That runs away and often, without check.

Oh! who can tell the wrongs of Rhyme?
  What child or negro was the first to fling
  The world this bauble, that can only ring
Hollow and false beneath the file of Time?

Music again—music that moves!
  That thy verse be a flying thing,
  Fleeing from a soul on speeding wing
Toward other skies and other loves.

And then, that thy verse may endure,
  O sprinkle it with the morning breeze,
  Fragrant with thyme under the trees.
And all the rest is . . . literature.

## THE CLOWN

THE stage, half-shaken by a noisy orchestra,
Creaks underneath the clown's big feet with sharp refrain;
Whilst he with his good-natured chaff and fine disdain
Berates the gaping crowd that throngs the muddy way.

His costume, with his forehead chalked and cheeks so gay,
Is marvelous. He speaks, then makes a dumb appeal,—
Receiving from behind the kicks he does not feel.
Embraces then his doughty dame and makes his play.

With heart and soul they cheer his gross buffoonery.
And in his gaudy doublet, twirling all awry,
'Twere better that he stop. His buskins might not hold!

But this that one can most admire and most defend,
Is this perruque he wears, and on the queue, so bold,
The saucy butterfly poised proudly at the end.

## ALLEGORY

*To Jules Valedon*

DESPOTIC, heavy Summer, with a languid sweep,
Like some bored king watching a tortured victim cry,
Stretches itself beneath the white and ardent sky
And yawns. Far from his work the toiler lies asleep.

Weary, the morning lark dumb silence seems to keep.
No cloud, no breath of air, naught seems to stir on high
To place a wrinkle where smooth depths of azure lie
Unmoved, and silence ends in silence vast and deep.

Even the grasshoppers have felt the heavy spell.
In their straight beds of stones, uneven, in the dell,
The little babbling brooks, half dry, have ceased to flow.

Incessantly the surge of sultry light thrown back
Luminously extends its flux and reflux slow. . .
And here and there are flitting wasps, yellow and black.

## THE INN

*To Jean Moréas*

WHITE walls and roof of red, this is the Inn, benign,
Set by the dusty road that makes our poor feet bleed.
Blue wine, good bread, for passport not the slightest need—
Gay little inn with "Bonheur" on the swinging sign.

Here thou canst smoke, and sing, and sleep, for all is thine.
The host is an old soldier, and his wife can feed
And wash and comb ten scruffy urchins gone to seed,
And talk of love and ease and never once repine.

The kitchen, with its low black roof where roosts the hen,
Its chromos "Maleck Adel" and "The Three Wise Men,"
Welcomes you with the perfume of good cabbage soup.

Do you not hear? This is the pot that hums a lay
With the clock's ticktacking pulse. And, if you stoop,
An open window shows the landscape, far away.

## CIRCUMSPECTION

*To Gaston Sénéchal*

GIVE me your hand, breathe softly here, let's find a seat
Under this giant tree where light winds die away
In broken sighs that flutter 'neath the branches gray,—
Bathed in the soft caressing moonlight pale and sweet.

Sit still, and toward our knees let fall our eyes, discreet,
And think of nothing—only dream. Give them their way,
The happiness that flies, and love that will not stay.
Our hair, an owl's wing touches in our calm retreat.

Let us forget to hope. But wise and self-contained,
Our souls should hold the spell and this that has remained
From the serene death of the sun, so still and deep.

In silence let us dream in this nocturnal charm.
It is not well to trouble in his quiet sleep
The god of nature, mute, and yet so full of harm.

## VERSES TO BE SLANDERED

*To Charles Vignier.*

THIS evening leaning o'er your sleeping form, dear one;
Your body lying chastily on my humble bed;
As one who ponders over something he has read,
I gazed, and saw that all is vain beneath the sun!

And ah, that one should live, what marvel, finely done!
We are so like the flowers where fold on fold is spread!
O thought bewildering, that nearly turns the head!
Sleep, poor one, sleep! Through fear for you my sleep is gone.

Sorrow of loving you, my frail love, breathing low,
As one breathes on that fateful day when he must go.
Lips dumb and cold—life waiting at death's portal.

O mouth that laughs in dream upon my mouth, and waits
The other more ferocious laugh with which it mates!
Oh, wake! and tell me quick. The soul, is it immortal?

## II

### Languor

*To Georges Courteline*

I AM the Empire in its decadence, where one
By one they pass, the great Barbarians white,—
Composing, in an idle mood, acrostics light,
In style of gold where dance the languors of the sun.

My lonely soul's heart-sick with weariness alone.
Yonder they say is waged the long drawn bloody fight.
O weak of will, and full of this corroding blight!
Unable to enjoy life's flower—no triumphs won—

To seek calm death, life's final blessing, no desire!
All's drunk! Bathyllus, have you quit your laughter gay?
Ah, all is drunk,—all eaten! Nothing more to say!

Only a silly poem you scatter in the fire;
Only a sullen slave neglected of all men;
Only a sad disgust, for reasons past my ken!

## IV

### Landscape

TOWARD St. Denis an ugly landscape met the eye,
However, there one day we strolled, my love and I.
We both were angry and quarreled on the way.
The level sun of summer burned with its steady ray
The plain, all dry and parched, and seeming like a roast.

'Twas shortly after we had had the Siege and most
Of "country houses" had been leveled to the ground.
Others were building up like toy homes, round on round;
And some had cannon balls imbedded in the plaster
And thus inscribed: A SOUVENIR OF THE DISASTER.

## VI

### The Poet and the Muse

O CHAMBER, have you kept their foolish specters grim,
Where falls the gloom, and, save the spider, naught is heard?
O chamber, have you kept those figures vaguely blurred,
Traced by the dirty walls and scattered scratches, dim?

Fie! Furnished chamber, that recoils from all of these
In this dry play of distance to the visage stirred
Of memories of so many fateful things occurred,—
Do they regret those nights—those nights of Hercules?

Interpret as you please, it is not that, I say:
You will not guess my meaning, folk of good intent.
I say to you that all your thoughts are far away.

O chamber that takes flight in rays so sadly spent,
You only know! Perhaps it is not past your ken,
What marriage nights shall have deflowered our nights, since then!

## VIII

### A Rogue

*To Jean Moréas*

WITH the eyes of a death's-head,—a skull
That the moon makes meager and thin,
All my past—let us say all my remorse—
From my window mocks me, within.

With the voice of an old man failing fast,
As one hears at a theater,
All my remorse—let us say all my past—
Mumbles a tralala bitter.

With the fingers, green, of a corpse on a gibbet,
A fool frets a wheezy guitar;
Dancing on the future, on exhibit,
With an elasticity rare.

Old rogue, begone! I love not this at all,
Cease your fool songs and dances gay.
He answers thus: "This is less farcical
Than you're inclined to think today."

But, as to your concern, O sweet Knave, pish!
This much, at least, I'd have you know:
I'm mindful but this far, that, if you wish,
Why,—clear out!—go to Jericho!

## IX

### Madrigal

YOU madden me these days of autumn pale and white,
Because within your eyes there burns a beastly light.
And you have gnawed me, like the princess Mouse, the while,
With the fine end of that sharp tooth which is your smile,
Maiden august, who makes my sorrow blazon clear,
Again, as with the rancid oil of your old tear!
Yea, foolish, I will die of that damned look you keep!
But go (will you?) the unsuspecting pool's asleep,
And from the lilies, fleet one needs acclaim at last,
Dead water has drunk up the wind that swept each mast.
Throw yourself in, exalt! to make my grief more drear,
Speak thou in tones so low one must be deaf to hear.

## RECENTLY

### Prologue

THESE are things of the twilight,
Visions when the night declines.
O Truth, thou giveth them light
Even as a dawn that shines

So dimly in the shade abhorred,
One doubts, each moment, if these be
Created by the pale moon, blurred
By tossing branches of a tree,

Or, if these phantoms, dark, morose,
Come hither to take shape and soul,
Uniting here and circling close
In a harmonious whole

Of nature and of the sun;—
Man blessing, God proclaiming high,
And offering, one by one,
Pure hymns to the sweet blue sky.

# LOVE

## *(AMOUR)*

THE WALK

## BALLAD

### On Two Young Elm Trees

My garden was sweet as 'twas fair,
Though humble 'twas rich to possess;
Half orchard, with vegetables rare,
With some flowers that bloomed, none the less,
In colors of happiness.
Birds sat on the boughs of each tree;
And grass stretched for idleness—
But dearer my elms were to me.

From my dining room, lighted and clear,
Where wine often flowed to excess,
I saw them salute in the air
When touched by the wind in its stress,
And bend in a loving caress,
Their leaves seemed to flute as in glee;
In that close there was joy, I confess—
But dearer my elms were to me.

Alas! when came time to impair
My joy without hope of redress;
The orchard and garden did share
In the gloom of my bitter distress;
And the flowers that bloomed to excess,
And the grass that pillowed so free;
And the bird that my sorrows impress—
But dearer my elms were to me.

ENVOI

O prince, I have known the simpleness,
And joy where your hamlets be,
With health, and love, and with kindliness—
But dearer my elms were to me.

## PARSIFAL

PARSIFAL has vanquished the Damsels, their gentle
Babble and amusing luxury, and their bent
Toward the Flesh of the virgin boy they would tempt
To love their glowing breasts and their gentle babble.

He has vanquished the Woman with heart so subtle,
Displaying her tempting arms and throat like a lily bent;
He has vanquished Hades and returned to his tent
With the heavy trophy of burnished metal,

With the spear in his arms that pierced the Saviour's side.
He has healed the king and now a king, in his pride,
He has himself become—priest of the Holy Grail.

He kneels to adore in garments of golden fire
The vase where the Saviour's blood like the morning shines—
And, O, the voices of children singing in the choir!

## EVENING THOUGHT

CROUCHED in the withered grass and cold, an exile,
Under the yews, frost white, of that sad isle;
Or wandering like the ghostly forms that seem
In that wild landscape born as of a dream,
Where watch their fabled herds ere taking flight
The blue-eyed Barbarians with visage white,
The tender Ovid, lonely bard of Love,
Sweeps with his glance the sky—below—above,
And contemplates the wide expanse of sea.

His hair is thin—the gray locks blowing free
Above a forehead wrinkled, fold on fold;
His habit rent, the flesh cut by the cold,
Forlorn the haunting smile, eyes dull and worn,
His beard, now nearly white, is rudely torn.

How all these sorrows witness, in their way,
A life complete with sadness and dismay;
Excessive love, fierce envy, burning hate,
And some slight obligations to the State.
Thus Ovid mourns the Rome that once acclaimed
Him bard of Love—that Rome his muse proclaimed.

So Jesus, who obscures this life of mine,
Not being Ovid, I at least am Thine!

## LUCIEN LÉTINOIS

### III

O WOMAN! Prudent, wise,—calm enemy,
As yet half conscious of your victory.
Killing the wounded, seeking out the spoils,
And spreading ruin far with iron and flame.
O good uncertain friend, so little sure,
Sweet—often too sweet—like a fire of coals
That lulls one in a gentle soothing sleep
Where death to soul and body often lurks.
Woman, I'm done with you for good—take here
(However, with a sense of half regret
From one that one remorse alone recalls)
This insult. But as you can never have
Remorse, more than a pine a living shade,
This, then, is my definitive farewell.
Tree fatal to the refuge of our race,
From Eden to this Irritated Day.

## V

I HAVE a mania for love. My foolish heart is weak.
No matter when, no matter what, no matter where.
Wherever the light of beauty, or virtue, or valiance shines,
There my heart throws itself with furious speed;
And, having clasped at last, embraces a hundred times
The being or object it pursued with tireless zeal.
Then, when the illusion has flown—has taken wing,
My heart becomes lonely and sad, yet faithful and true;
Leaving to the ingrates something, at least, of itself—
Blood or flesh. Then, without further grieving to death,
Immediately embarks for the isles of the Chimeras,
Carrying naught but the bitter tears it had known,
And the frightful despairs of the moment—
Then re-embarks.

. . . . . .

I have a mania for love. What shall I do?
Bah, nothing!

## XVIII

DO you recall in Paradise, dear soul,
The station at Auteuil—the trains of old
That bore you daily, come from La Chapelle?
Now all is over! Well do I recall
Our meeting places 'neath the sloping stairs
Awaiting you—unable to forget
Your graceful movements coming down the steps.
How agile and how slim—an angel form
On a celestial ladder, floating down.
And then your friendly smile, so filial;
The cordial clasp of hands—your loyalty.

Your eyes—sweet, lively, clear and innocent—
Whose somber light went straight into my heart
And penetrated every shadow there.
The welcome o'er, and my old arms in yours
We went to stroll beneath the tuneful trees.
Ah, how we talked! Of metaphysics, too.
And how you argued—little *charbonnier*—
With stubborn frankness ready to deny,
But quick to pause at the first step of doubt.
Then we returned more slowly by the route,
Some scholars with me, rather with us both,
And dined on little, smoking very soon.—
And for a long time soothing a vague need.

Poor child, your voice, your voice in the Bois!

# PARALLELLY

*(PARALLÈLEMENT)*

## DEDICATION

DO you remember, coquette too mature,
Whose blarney many a vulgar flame beguiled,
The good old times, when, young and quite cock-sure,
You heard me gush in hyperbolic style?

And do you keep a memory of those days,
O plump one of the jerseys, *poult-de-soi?*
How I of old in queer fantastic ways,
Made court by mail, through gallant postal law?

And, Madam Mother, have you quite forgot?
No, no, I vow, even in your foolish fêtes;
My taste was bad, my grammar it was not,—
Unlike your own dear letters, silly sheets.

And when the hour of marriage rang at last
They told me, Ariadne, it was drear.
My hungry eyes, my kisses fierce and fast,
To your refusals making a dumb ear.

Do you recall, if it indeed be well,
Within your widowed heart's dull murmuring,
This I so apt, terrible, horrible,
And you, dear jewel, taking to the thing?

And all the row, the circus, and affrays,
That in the end upset our sad abode;
And have you not and have not I, these days,
Seen the last shameful windings of our road?

How sad! and here am I, lamentable
Debris on floods of vice—a sorry sight;
And here are you, a jade detestable,
And the thing eats me, till I needs must write.

## ALLEGORY

AN ancient temple crumbling like a dream
On the dim summit of a yellow hill,
Like some old throneless king, weeping at will,
Is vaguely mirrored on a sluggish stream.

With stupid mien and sleepy listless air,
A withered Naiad with her drowsy wiles,
Plagues with a willow wand a faun that smiles,
Like some old gallant rustic sitting there.

Stale and insipid theme that saddens me!
What bard among the singers can there be
Like me? Who moves me, in a sullen rage?

What worn out, frayed and dusty tapestry,
Trite as the settings of an opera stage,
As false, alas, as is my destiny?

## THE FRIENDS

### I

### On the Balcony

TWO forms watching the swallows in their flight.
One pale, with jet black hair; the other blonde
And pink—their flowing garments of old blond
Like vague serpents twining, cloudlike and light.

Both languorous as asphodels where bright
The sky glows with a full moon, soft and round,
Whose rays throb with emotion, deep, profound.

Thus, with arms pressing their bodies supple,
Strange couple pitying every other couple,
They dream upon the moonlit balcony.
Behind them in the room's rich somber shade,
Enthroned in stately pomp, as in a play,
And full of perfumes, stands the Bed, unmade.

## VI

### Sappho

WITH hollow eyes and bosoms firm and bold,
The maddened Sappho, torn by passions white,
Runs like a she-wolf on the beaches cold.

She dreams of Phaon, forgetful of the Rite,
And, seeing how her tears so illy fare,
By handfuls pulls her long and streaming hair.

Then she evokes, with grief, silent, yet deep,
The days when brightly shown the early fame
Of those warm loves extolled in songs of flame,
Sent, now, in memory to the maids asleep.

With pallid lids on weary eyes, she bends
And springs into the waters of La Moire.
On the black waves the lights from heaven pour—
And pale Selene has avenged the Friends.

## HARLOTS

### I

*To the Princess Roukine.*
*"Capellos de Angelos"*
*(Frandise espagnol)*

UGLY as though drawn by Boucher,
No powder in her flowing hair,
She's foully blonde, yet passing fair
To us who sin with her each day.

And it is mine, I think by right,
This golden head so often kissed;
This warm cascade so oft embraced,
Whose ends light me with rays of light.

But she is more to me, I hold,
Like some deep flaming circle o'er
The entrance of a temple door;
Or like the fabled fleece of gold.

And who shall sing this beauty's source
Save me, her chorister and priest,
Her slave, her master, who at least
Thus damns himself without remorse.

Her body with its harmonies,
As soft and white as is a rose;
As white as milk and pink as those
Pink lilies blown 'neath purple skies.

Thighs beautiful, breasts firm and tense;
The back, the loins, the stomach, feast
For the eyes and the hands in quest,
And for the mouth and every sense.

Mignon, let us see if thy bed
Has always 'neath the curtain's glow
The bewitched pillow, bulging so,—
And the mad sheets! O toward thy bed!

## III

### Casta Piana

BLUE hair with strands like rusty wheat,
Cold eyes and hard that are too sweet,
Beauty like a warm summer noon;
Breasts finely arched whose odors scent
Your cruel form magnificent;
Your pallors stolen from the moon,—

These charms o'erwhelm us with their guile,
Notre Dame of the garrets vile
In which we venerate your power
With unblessed candles,—Aves sung
For which no Angelus was rung,—
Yet tolled so many a sinful hour.

You smell of brimstone and of fire.
Men turn to fools at your desire.
To craven weaklings, vague and fleet,
In less time than to act or say,
To pass a dazzled time of day,
Or kiss the slippers on your feet.

Your garret is a fearful place!
Within it every day you face
The job of beating scoundrels there;
Of chasing rogues on pleasure bent,
Furnished the sacred sacrament.
For you, how little do they care!

You're right, my girl! So love me, then,
Better than young or aged men
Unskillful in the loving art.
For I—I know your manner best;
I know each movement, each behest;
And pledge you an indulgent heart.

Nay, nay, but put that frown to rout,
Casta, and drive away that pout;
And let me sip those sweets of thine
Piana,—sugar, salt, and spice—
Sweets that my thirsty lips entice—
And let me drink thy balms divine.

## REFERENCES

### II

#### False Impression

DAME mouse scampers,
Black in the gray of eve.
Dame mouse scampers,
Gray in the dark.

They sound the bell.
All the good prisoners sleep.
They sound the bell,
You, too, should sleep.

Not the bad dream.
No thought but of your loves.
Not the bad dream;
The good always!

The wide moonlight!
They snore close by your side.
The wide moonlight
In reality!

A cloud passes,
It grows dark as an oven,
A cloud passes:
Hold, the dawn of day!

Dame mouse scampers!
Pink in the rays so blue.
Dame mouse scampers:
Get up, you lazy!

## III

### Others

THE jail-yard blossoms with care,
Like the forehead
Of each one there
Who goes, with faltering step and thigh all
Shrunken quite,
Along the wall
Foolish with light.

Turn, Samsons without Delilah,
Without Philistine,
Turn well the
Mill the Fates predestine;
And, railing not the law, apart,
Crush at each move
Your faith, your heart
And your love.

They pass! and their poor shoes
Make a dry sound;
With pipe at nose
Humbly they go round.

A word—the dungeon is their lot!
Not a sigh.
It is so hot
They think to die.

And I—I go in measured strides
With that sad band.
Prepared, besides,
Nothing to withstand.
And if I, too, shall contrite be,
Thy stubborn vow,
Society
Did you choose me?

Brothers mine, good old robbers,
Sweet vagabonds,
Full blown sharpers,
My heart responds!
Smoke on philosophically,
Promenade you,
Peacefully.
'Tis sweet to nothing do.

## IV

## REVERSIBLES

*Totus in maligno positus.*

O HEAR the cats that make
A long, shrill cry,
Swift calls that come to wake,
Then slowly die.
Ah, where this sad scene blends,
The Alreadys are the Agains!

O the vague Angelus!
(Whence comes its toll?)
See light the Salutaris
In the depth of a hole.
Ah, in these mournful ways,
The Nevers are the Always!

What wild dreams fleet,
You wide white walls,
That the sobs repeat
With doleful calls!
Ah, in this place that severs,
The Always are the Nevers.

Sweetly you die, apart,
In obscurity,
Unwatched, O loving heart,
Without futurity!
Ah, in grief that naught allays,
The Agains are the Alreadys!

## V

### Tantalized

MY room looks closely on a railroad shed where trains
Rumble all night (my nights are white) with noisy strains.
Here are the engines fired and here the trains made up;
And truly 'tis a noise like that when birds wake up,
Thrown on the skies of bronze, and glass, and oil, and grease.
Such warblings one could hardly guess—they never cease.

One might well say 'twas like awaking birds that try
An early flight against the violet tinted sky,
And with the daylight scarcely yet begun to dawn.
O these trains that speed like torrents, thundering on!

## VI

### Improbable, But True

LA! I am in the Index, and in the dedications
Here I am Paul V. . . . pure and simple. The audacity
Of my friends (for publishers are of the saints)
Is great, and they should ban me from their catalogues.
Extraordinary and saponaceous thunder
Of an excommunication that I venerate
To the point of making any quantity of faults!
However, if I were not (forcibly) prevented,
I would love, seeing how contrary I am,
This modesty, so rare, in all the world of books.

## VII

### The Last Ten

BELGIUM, that gave to me this leisure without ease,
Thanks! Here at least I can reflect and seize
In the silence of these cells, calm and white,
The reasons, that, like insects, take their flight
Above the boastful reeds of a vain world;
Reasons of my eternal self, divine;
And I can ticket all (so dearly bought)
In the fine crystal cases of my thought.
But, O Belgium, this stubborn prison door,
Open at last—enough, why punish more?

Brussels, Aug., 1873.
Mons, Jan., 1875.

## MOONS

### I

I WISH, that I may kill you, O time that lays me waste,
To live again the days when my heart's love was chaste.
To lull my luxury and shame to the sweet notes
Of kisses on Her hand, and not upon Their throats.
The vile Tiberias I am to-day, may keep
Me hour by hour, and though I laugh or though I weep,
Ah, may he sleep! to dream far from a cruel joy
Of those pale budding maids, honored without alloy
In moonlit fêtes, after the green sward dance so light,
When from the steeple strikes the middle hour of night.

### II

After the Manner of Paul Verlaine

THE moon's to blame for what is done
When I assume the mask nocturne;
And Saturn who inclines her urn,
And her pale moons, one after one.

Romances without words! How rare
The charm of their expressed discord!
False and insipid word for word,
And yet what sound and thrill is there!

'Tis not through lack of pardonings
For those who wound your sense of truth;
Myself I pardon, 'tis my youth
Embellishing some foolish things.

And I absolve these lies from harm,
'Tis they that bring a banal joy,
Since these sad leisures I employ
Inoculate me with their charm.

## III

### Explanation

*Je vous dis que ce n'est pas ce que l'on pensa.*
P. V.

THE happiness to bleed upon a true friend's heart,
The need to weep upon his breast these tears of mine,
The sweet desire to speak to him, low and apart,
The dream to be with him alone, without design.

The grief at having such good enemies, in swarms.
The deep disgust at being an obscene machine.
The horror of mad cries, impure, from demon forms.
The nightmare of a never ending stormy scene.

To give one's life to God or to one's native land.
Or to the other, whom you love—kissing the hand
That ne'er betrayed—kissing the mouth that never lies.

To live far from all tasks, from saintly torments fly
For the clear breasts of women with the shining eye—
And for the . . . rest! toward what deaths full of infamies!

## THE LAST FÊTE GALLANT

ONCE for all, separate—let us be fleet,
Dear gentlemen, and you, most dear mesdames.
Enough of marriage songs with loud acclaims,
And then, besides, our joys were cloying sweet.

No remorse, no sighs—let's break the spell.
'Tis frightful we had ever felt such deep
Affection for those poor deluded sheep,
Beribboned with the worst of doggerel.

A trifle foolish, also, in our flight,
With our grand airs of barely touching earth.
The god of love wills we should have no dearth
Of breath. He is a young god—also right.

Let's part, I say, and without sorrow.
But O, that hearts once pure and gaily beating,
Today should be so noisily entreating
That we set sail for Sodom and Gomorrah!

## POEM SATURNINE

IT was bizarre and Satan ought to laugh.
This summer day had made me drunk and rude.
What foolish singer this, with all her chaff,
And the disgusting things that she has spewed!

And this piano set in too much smoke,
Beneath the swinging lamp with red flame, blurred;
It seemed—my ever growing anger spoke—
It seemed as though to mock my very word.

I think—my senses being all awry—
My bile seethed like fermenting wine in casks.
Oh! The café concerts and refrains that fly,
Made false by heavy plaster of the masks.

In this vile hamlet where I wandered late,
Sucking with relish some refreshing ice,
Three rowdies with their eyes degenerate
Ogled continually at my grimace.

That I was hooted at was very plain
By those young toughs near where one takes the car;
And the abuse I threw them, though in vain,
Was such I nearly choked on my cigar.

Now I return: I hear a voice—the light
Step of a ghost. Someone, or no one near?
Yet, surely someone passed.—Ah, what a night!
The hour of droll awakening soundeth clear.

Attigny (Ardennes). May 31, July 1, 1885.

## THE IMPUDENT

THE evil eye and miseries wide,
Said with no thought to slander,
Have given to this fiend of pride
The soul of an old prisoner.

Yes, *jettatore,* sad wanderer,
The first and last of them that sigh,
You dwell in the black shadows where
Men will pursue you till you die.

The children ripen at your look.
Refusals many must you brook.
Since, impudent, your ways annoy.

Beauties that pass, your smiling elves,
Throw not your coins to this bad boy,
But give, instead of alms—yourselves.

## THE IMPENITENT

OLD rover worn and weary eyed,
With hellish lust unsatisfied,
Whose faded orbs grow clear and bright
When some fair woman passes by
And, like a window, throws a light.

Your senses waken, subtle, high;
Stamen and pistil, too, reply;
She is all flower, all fruit, all food.
And from your mouth your tongue extends
To lick your lips so hungry-rude.

Old fractious faun that rears and bends,
Are you not done?—what further ends
Can serve your lust the filthy host?
Old fool, have you not had your due,
And is it nothing, this you boast?

In spite of dainties lost to view,
Your heart grown icy through and through;
Gnawing, as though a luxury,
Your heart, your loins, your very spleen—
Your vitals wheresoe'er they be.

Sugared and sweet, of honeyed mien,
Damning like fire from heaven seen;
Powder-black, or blue as a flower,
Your passioned gaze seeks every eye,
And this in spite of heaven's Power.

The noses please you that pass by,
Gracious or saucy ones awry;
On women, as on men, they place
The indications that they bear,
And give the force to every face.

Long kisses clear as songs are clear,
Astringent kisses small and dear
That seem to suck the souls they frame.
The good, fat kisses of a child,
And dancing kisses, like a flame.

Kisses hungry, and kisses wild,
Kisses drunken, for mouths defiled,
Kisses languid and ferocious:
These the best loved, notwithstanding,
Are they not? fair mouths atrocious!

Bodies, too, your taste demanding,
Better in repose than standing;
Their charms displaying as they march,
Of no importance where they stroll,
Bridge Holy Spirit or the Arch.

But this that you demand of all,
Large, small, of aspect bright or dull,
Is this: they must at least be young
With fine strong feet and arms as light
As muscular, and tresses hung

Like this: long, curly, or cut quite
Short—otherwise perverse. In spite
Of which, at least, there needs must be
Some saving touch of innocence—
Some show, at least, of decency.

Nay, nay, be witness and defence,
Ye gods who know her fire intense;
That all her manner, all her art,
Can sound the depth where pleasures flow,
With useless trifles put apart.

And it is thus that morals go,
And meet that scoffers have some show.

But you,—you laugh to see it all,
As some one, being more than pressed,
Passes beyond forbidden wall.

And, somewhat weary and distressed,
At being forced to thus protest,
You raise a drink-degraded voice—
But not a ninny's voice—and say:
"What matter? Comrade, we've no choice

If we be creatures of such clay!"

## BALLAD OF THE LIFE IN RED

TO one who sees the rosy way,
Youth unsatisfied as yet,
Or second childhood not less gay,
No vows or superfluous regret;
Ignoring all that the times beget
The sage sits dull where joys hold sway—
Instinctively—like a phallus set.—
But I see life in its red array.

The wise one reasons and notes alway
The changing modes that the day beset;
Scanning all things and seeking to weigh
Life in his rough hands hard as jet;
Time and more it were need to get
One like this from his nook to stray;
The world is gray by this recluse met.—
But I see life in its red array.

He, this other, about him may
Throw his regards, well meant, but let
Only his eye for a moment stay,
And the world is a thing of vain regret—

To the puffed eye of philanthropy;
All seems black to him, maid or grisette,
Men, or wine, or books of the day.—
But I see life in its red array.

ENVOI

Prince or princesses go, I pray,
In triumph down the road where I
Plod in the ruts of the roadside clay.—
But I see life in its red array.

## HANDS

THESE are not the hands of a churchman,
Some elegant prelate less saintly than fine;
And yet they seem to wear the same distinction
Imprinted here succinctly line on line.

And these are not the hands of an artist,
Some lonely poet, let us say, obscure;
But something as sad—perhaps the saddest,
Resembling a group in miniature.

These hands have their character and souls,
They are a world in movement, so it seems;
The thumb and little finger are the poles
Between which flow the strange magnetic streams.

The meteors that shoot across the brain,
Quite like those tempests that o'errun the heart,
Are here repeated with a logic plain,
And mirrored with a consummating art.

Nor is there here the worthy rural palm,
Of those who dwell beyond the cities' show;
Theirs are the deep drawn lines, how calm!
That seem to say: "Toil, that ye nothing owe."

They are meager; they are long; they are gray—
The knuckles are quite large; the nails are square—
Like hands the windows of a church display
Where saints beneath the golden branches fare.

Or like some old decrepit soldiers', met
In after years with all their struggles o'er;
Recalling their long battles, fields blood-wet,
In summer twilight by some tavern door.

They have tonight, these hands so strangely dry,
Beneath the scanty hair the years have wrought,
A rougher aspect to the touch and eye,
As though in prey to some sad afterthought.

The cruel care that holds them in embrace,
Their bitter half-dream seems as though to mar,
And wrings from them a sinister grimace
In their peculiar way, hands that they are.

I fear to see them lying, still as time,
Here on my table, underneath my eyes,
As though premeditating some black crime—
Some mad, some furious deed of monstrous guise.

The right hand at my right—left at my left—
I am alone, sitting with forehead bowed;
While slowly in my chamber, so bereft,
The linen takes the aspect of a shroud.

Unceasing howls the wind. With one last gleam
The twilight dies across my window shutter.
These hands! If they should be some ghastly dream!
So much the better then—or worse—or better!

## PIERROT GAMIN

THIS is not Pierrot, the wild,
Any more than Pierrot, the child.
This is Pierrot, Pierrot, Pierrot.
Pierrot gamin, Pierrot gay,
Fresh as a green nut, fresh as May,
This is Pierrot, Pierrot, Pierrot!

In stature scarce a meter tall,
No task to fetter, like a doll,
In his eyes the flash of steel
Suited to the cunning deil.—
To his malice infinite—
Grimacer, yet poet quite.

Lips red as a wound is red,
With evil luxuries well fed.
Face pale, mouth mocking—fine;
Long, accentuated—in each line
The tell-tale thought that clings
And contemplates all things.

Body slender and yet not thin.
Voice not shrill (to a girl's akin).
Adolescence that tarries late.
Voice to command, body en fête.
Charming creature ready quite
To satisfy each appetite.

Go, brother, comrade, go!
Play the devil high and low.
Take of Paris every toll.
Roam the world and be the soul,
Noble, high, with vile intent,
Of our spirits innocent.

Grow, for such the way of life.
Increase your bitterness with strife.
Exaggerate your gaiety—
Character—aureole—to satiety.
The grimace is the symbol
Of our simplicity!

## CAPRICE

O POET, falsely rich and poor, true man,
To the exterior rich and poor, such is the plan.
(Concerning gold, how can one truly know your heart?)
Turn by turn you're facile, droll, and sumptuous.
From hopeful "green" to a sad black compunctious.
Your garb is always slack in some essential part.

A button fails. A thread's awry. Whence come
These spots—ah, these—sadly come or welcome?—
That laugh and weep upon the stuff one wears.
Tie knotted well or ill; shoes bright or terne.
Briefly, a type to hang out at the Vieille-Lanterne,
Or gaily wander underneath the stars.

Pshaw! A tramp? but hardly that—true man, the only true.
A poet! Yet, if your language is not true
You are, at least; and as for language! well, 'tis bad
For those who love you not, for fools who hold aloof;
The moon will warm the one who has no roof,
And death will lull the hearts forever sad.

Poor hearts that fall so low, too proud and good;
The irony your lips have understood.
With all your wounds, hearts wounded day by day,—
Little sacred hearts of Jesus most lamentable!—
Go, poet, go, and seek, if possible,
To keep from starving—if indeed you may.

# HAPPINESS

*(BONHEUR)*

## VI

So very old already,
Dreams and memories glad,
Sweet magic of the future,
Alas, how drear and sad:

A girl, almost a child,
Lisping a little, too;
That you surprised in dreaming,
Loving her dressed in blue.

Her hands you kissed so often,
Her mouth and shining hair;
This was the age triumphant,
Without design or care.

Then came the sad estrangement
With bitter words and breath;
For one this was the passing,
And for the other—death.

O wake for her, sweet Saviour,
When her last hour shall be,
So that her soul, my sister,
Shall live eternally.

## X

Fantastic "chance" that wrecked me, without sense or rhyme,
Has made of me a lodger for a certain time—
And this the last, I think—here in the hospital.
This truth that dawns on me is very brutal,

Explainable, however, by a robbery sad—
(Of which the history, 'tis said, is truly bad.)
That I've the rheumatism is a mere detail,
And, though I have to shelter here, why should I rail.
I'm here—live here. Some say I "vegetate." So be!
They are deceived. Through life's strict ways I come
to see
Some needful bread, not too much wine, a better bed.
I expiate some ancient sin, 'twere better said.
(Very ancient?) My blood oft felt this sudden heat!
And, relatively speaking, penance is so sweet
In martyrology and things armorial
Of poets—perhaps it is proverbial!
Like any place, here one may rest in peaceful mood,
Be a good child of prison—a benign Latude,

Not counting some poor simple rhymer, so to speak,
Who faces death from starving, being all too weak
In these sad times when life is rough, hard and unkind.
To die—to die! O loving Muse to me inclined,
To die in this sad place is better far I hold—
Unless, that here one is a "layman" and the old
Abuses are reformed—the "citizen" made free
And strong. In fact, he must, else the stability
Of Government be lost, with this, that most alarms,
Since he is not on horseback on a coat of arms.
To die, then, in the sheltering arms Municipal,
A thought that at its best is hardly cheerful.
Yet, haunted by this thought, I own my shameful rôle,
'Tis well, they ought to treat me like a blatant fool.

The conversation in this modest resting place
Is not so difficult or void of social grace.
These good folk that the Journal renders quite inane,
Conserve, in spite of all attacks and fierce disdain
That the Instruction hurls at each hard stubborn head,
Some knowledge of the times and what is being said.

The Revolution that 'tis always well to cite
And also to condemn, has not extinguished quite
Their lively spirits, that are none the less sincere;
And I prefer them to the numbskulls of my sphere,—
Truly! and I can stand the shock and let things be—
Their vice and virtue are indifferent to me.

Lacking only Christian hope—this is a convent.
I need for nothing here—in fact I'm well content.
And here would I remain, my faith! All of my life;
And without jealousy, I hope, and without strife,
If, when I'm cured, indeed, if such I am, it be
That God has not some other labor set for me.

## XXV

*To Monsieur Borély.*

YOU ask of me some verses on "Amour,"
My book of sad emotions and distress,
Far distant now in my strange Songs, that press
And fall, a flood more bitter every hour.

What say, unless "Poor Yorick!" better, "Poor
Lelian!" poor soul, so full of feebleness,
Grown soft by time, caress, and laziness;
Or, taken with a sudden stroke to war

On all his past, so pure, without a stain;
Well ordered by calm thought of good intent;
To damn them all, those hours with God well spent.

Then it returns, my Work, worn by the strain,
And kneels in penance, asking to be blessed. . . .
Pray with and for the bard—the Poor Lelian.

## XXXI

IMMEDIATELY after the sumptuous Salutaris,
With all the lights put out, save a few flickering candles,
The psalms for the dead are sung in minor tones
By the clerks and by the people, seized with melancholy.

With solemn knell the bells of the cathedral
Are answered from the towers of all the diocese,
Hovering and weeping o'er the towns and the country,
In the night, so early come, of the long delayed autumn.

Each goes to rest, led by the doleful voices
So infinitely sweet of the memorial bronze,
That lulls the sleep, a little sad, of those yet living,
With memories of the dead of all the parishes.

# SONGS FOR HER

## *(CHANSONS POUR ELLE)*

FANTASTICS

## II

COMPANION, savory and good,
To whom I have bestowed the care
Of my old days, e'en as I should;
Who is my last sole witness here;
Come, my beloved, that I may kiss,
Embrace you long, to take your breath.
My heart near yours beats full of bliss
With that strong love that lasts till death.
So love me true,
For without you,
I nothing am,
And nothing can!

Poor as a church mouse, I, and yet
You had ten fingers, and no more;
Our table was too often set
In basement or in garret poor;
Yet never failed our bed to ring
With joyous sounds in lieu of wealth;
And it was I was always king
Of all your gaiety and health!
So love me true,
For without you,
I nothing am,
And nothing can!

After our nights of love, robust,
I come forth strengthened and relieved;
For your caress is rich and just,
And this, my flesh, is not deceived.
Your love makes valiant every part
Of my poor being like a wine;

Alone, you only have the art,
To puff me up a heart divine.
So love me true,
For without you,
I nothing am,
And nothing can!

Of what import your past, my belle,
Of what import, *parbleu!* my own;
For I shall always love you well,
And you shall love but me alone.
In our two miseries let's unite
The pardon that the world withholds.
So let's embrace, O hold me tight!—
And fie upon the world that scolds.
So love me true,
For without you,
I nothing am,
And nothing can!

## XIII

BRUNETTE, or blonde?
Black, or like the skies,
Your eyes?
I do not know, and yet I love their depths profound,
And I adore your hair, that in disorder flies.

Mild, or severe?
Wise, or with a mocking art,
Your heart?
I do not know, and yet give thanks to nature dear,
That made your heart my master—vanquished every part.

Faithful, untrue?
Of no import it shall be
To me,
If, always well disposed to give my love its due,
Your beauty serve the pledge of my desire for you.

## XX

YOU trust the signs of the coffee grounds,
Believe in omens and games of surprise—
But I—I only believe in your eyes.

Your faith in fairy tales has no bounds;
You believe in days that are lucky, and dreams—
But I—I believe in your lies, so it seems.

You believe in some vague Being, too;
In some special saint that works as a charm,
And in all the Aves, that keep you from harm.

I only believe in the hours blue
And pink on which you shed delights
In the voluptuousness of my white nights.

And so firm is my faith in its view
Toward all these things I hold to be true,
That I see nothing else in this world but you.

## XXIII

I'VE had no luck with womankind,
And, since I've grown to man's estate,
It always seems to be my fate
To pick the worst that one can find.

I'm schooled in things that bring a curse.
Revolting, also, in a way,
As bad as any man today—
Perhaps, by chance, I'm even—worse.

My women have been light, 'tis clear.
That you are not a saint is plain.
This frank avowal gives me pain,
Said thus between us, O my dear!

'Tis true I once was quite a rake.
And true, perhaps, that I am yet.
Dishonored thus, can I forget?
My thirst for horrors naught can slake.

Bah, let us never cease to be
Warm lovers, Mignon, for we can—
You a good girl—I, virtuous man—
Since I love you and you love me!

## XXV

ONCE I was mystic, but it could not last.
(For Woman binds me with a strand of hair.)
And yet I have respect for what is past,
For the ideal that I now forswear.

Yes, Woman binds me with a silken hair!

In youth I sent my daily prayer to God.
(Today 'tis you who have me on my knees.)
And I was full of faith and of white hope,
Of charity whose pure fire kissed the breeze.

Today 'tis you who have me on my knees!

Woman, the Master, rules through you today.
Rules with a force that makes the strongest bend.
But O, the treacherous, who still must sway,
And feign all things simply to gain her end.

To mystic days long gone this lay I send!

# ODES IN HER HONOR

## *(ODES EN SON HONNEUR)*

V

WHEN peacefully
I talk with you—
This is truly charming—
Then peacefully
You talk with me.

When I dispute
And foolishly reproach you,
Then you dispute—
Ah, this is droll!
And sharply you reproach me.

If it happens
I deceive you,
O misery,
You run the town,
And gaily you deceive me.

If I am true
For any length of time,
You stay with me,
Remaining true
For just that length of time.

If happy
I should chance to be,
You are twice as happy,
And I am glad
To see you also happy.

Do I weep,
You weep with me.
Am I in need,

How gaily
You hasten to my side.

Am I faint
You too are faint,
And I am more
In seeing you
So fainting.

Ah, when I die
Will you die, too?
"As I love you
The most I, too,
Will surely die."

. . . And I awake
From all these musings.
Alas! Was this a dream?
(A dream, or what?)
These musings.

## XIX

THEY tell me, Sweet, you are untrue,
What matter, should I be dismayed?
You could not break, dear one—not you—
An oath that you had never made.

They tell me that you are unkind
Toward me—I who sometimes am rude.
Unkind? Far better, could they find
A tune more suited to your mood.

Unkind? And yet you always offer,
Dear one, a sweet, amusing smile;
My queen, from whose resplendent coffer
I draw rich treasures, worth the while.

They say, and they think well to say,
They say you do not love me, dear.
Why care—I have your smile each day,
And I am happy when you're near.

You love me not, and yet the grace
And the whole force of pride and duty,
You give to me, O fair of face,
O you voluptuous beauty!

You love me not? O well, if true,
It little matters, does it not?
"If you don't love me, I love you"
But say, you love me, do you not?

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# NOTES

# NOTES

Page 43. *To Eugène Carrière.* The source of this poem is to be found in Baudelaire's Fleurs du Mal, in the poem entitled: "Epigraphe pour un livre condemné," according to Ernest Dupy, in his Poètes et Critiques.

Page 46. *Vow.* In the original the first line of this poem begins, Ah! les oarystis. . . . There is no exact equivalent for the word oarystis in English. It is Greek in origin and obsolete in French.

Page 48. *My Familiar Dream.* The original reads as follows in the eleventh line: "Comme ceux des aimés que la Vie exila." Francis Yvon Eccles says: "Que la Vie exila, is obscure. Were the beloved banished by this life from their home in heaven? Or were they simply severed by its vicissitudes from their ideal loves? Perhaps this is only an instance in which the poet has said more than he means, and seems to mean more than he has said."

Page 49. *Parisian Sketch.* This poem is written of at length by Lemaître in Vol. IV, Les Contemporains, and held up to ridicule, as are several others, notably Twilight of Mystic Eve and To Clymene.

Page 50. *Effects of Night.* This curious and picturesque study reminds one of Aloysius Bertrand and his fantastic silhouettes in Caspar of the Night. Beaudelaire was never more effective in Fleurs du Mal. It is interesting to note a change in the text from "deux cent vingtcinq pertuisaniers" in Choix de Poésies to "un gros de hauts pertuisaniers" in the Oeuvres Completes.

Page 55. *Valpurgis Night, Classic.* The line

> "This is rather the sabbat of the second Faust,
> than the other;"

refers to the second part of Goethe's Faust.

Page 60. *Song of the Ingénues.*

> "The Caussades and the Richelieux,
> And the Knights Faublas all pass,"

The Caussades and the Richelieux were gallant partisans, and Knights Faublas were those who were (temperamentally, at least) like the Chevalier Faublas in Louvet de Coubray's romance, Amours du Chevalier Faublas, an eighteenth century narrative of frivolous life.

Page 64. *A Dahlia.* This poem seemed to have pleased Sainte-Beuve, who mentioned the fact in a letter to Verlaine in 1866. Woman and Cat and Song of the Ingénues were likewise praised by Banville, according to Donos, in his Verlaine Intime.

Page 65. *Nevermore.* Lepelletier writes of this poem as follows: "Doubtless he (Verlaine) had forewarnings of the future, but when in 1865 he wrote: 'Happiness has walked side by side with me,' the lines charged with dispair applied to no actual fact in his life; as yet he has experienced no real troubles."

Page 67. *Marco.* A footnote accompanying this poem in the first edition of Poèmes Saturniens reads: "The author acknowledges that the rhythm and style of this refrain are borrowed from a poem in the collection of M. J-T de Saint-Germain: Les Roses de Noël (Mignon)."

Page 71. *Pantomime.* Pierrot, Clitander, Columbine, Harlequin—how immortal these creatures of fancy! Born in the South, when the world was younger and more joyous, they pirouette through Italian comedy; do the bidding of Molière and Shakespeare; dance in the canvases of the XIII century; and the age of cement and steel has not wholly extinguished their joyous laughter and merry quips.

Page 78. *Fantastics.* This poem was originally printed in the first edition of Jadis et Naguère. As it obviously belongs to the Fêtes Galantes, it is incorporated in this work in later editions. Scaramouche is a buffoon, born in Italian comedy. His chief rôle is that of receiving kicks and cuffs. Pulcenelli is a type essentially Italian and often confounded with the French Polichinelle.

Page 83. *Indolents.* Ernest Dupuy writes: "This poem . . . is one of the most curious in the collection and arranged in the style employed by Verlaine at this time. . . . The little piece is truly pretty . . . Verlaine has transposed . . . a half-dozen verses that Shakespeare (in Troilus and Cressida) has put in the mouth of Pandarus of Troy."

Page 86. *Colloquy Sentimental.* Dupy writes of this poem: "This dialogue, so compact, with the questions and answers interlaced like two rapiers, cold, rigid and brilliant, is a summary of the bitter reflections of Lysander. To the tender fears of Hermia, the melancholy lover adds, by way of emphasis, the couplets formed of somber presentiments."

Page 96. VIII. *A Saint in her bright halo, . . .* This is a poem in the style of the Fêtes Galantes which the poet, inspired by a genuine passion, has fashioned into a Bonne Chanson.

Page 107. *Romances Without Words.* This curious title of Verlaine's third book of poems seems to have been suggested by Mendelssohn's Songs Without Words.

Page 109. I. *This is the langorous ecstasy, . . .* Tolstoy in his essay, What is Art, quotes this poem entire as an example of what he calls Verlaine's affected and unintelligible style, asking what it all means—particularly the expression, "cri doux que l'herbe agitée expire."

Page 109. II. *I vaguely guess, across a murmur drawn . . .* This poem, nearly meaningless in the original, and

entirely so in the translation, is inserted as an example of Verlaine at his worst. A poem evidently dictated by the Green Fairy.

Page 111. VI. *Behold the dog of Jean Nivelle . . .* In French folk lore the dog of Jean de Nivelle was always running away when most wanted. Unlike Jean's dog the Mère Michel's cat was always coming back—to the sorrow of Pere Lustucru. The old French song concerning this famous cat begins as follows:

"C'est la mère Michel qui a perdu son chat,
Qui cri' par la fenêtr qui est-c' qui lui rendra,
Et l' compèr' Lustucru qui lui a réspondu:
"Allez, la mer' Michel, votre chat n'est pas perdu."

The poem is more or less meaningless to one unacquainted with French nursery rhymes.

Page 115. *Charleroi.* Kobolds are fabulous spirits of the mines. Charleroi, being a mining town in Belgium, the reference is obvious.

Page 119. *Malines.* There are two renderings of the fifteenth line of this poem in the original French. In Choix de Poésies the line reads: "Sous vos yeux a peine irises!" In Ouevres Completes the word "yeux" is substituted for that of "cieux."

Page 126. X. *No! 'Twas Gallician—Jansenist— . . .* The last line of this poem is as follows:

Sur tes ailes de pierre, ô folle Cathédrale!

The meaning of the adjective "folle" in this connection is exceedingly obscure. Why foolish Cathedral? There is also the French word "folle," meaning a net with large meshes.

Page 128. III. *Hope shines as doth a wisp of straw. . . .* For a ludicrous analysis of this curiously mystical poem the reader is referred to Lemaître, Contemporains, Vol. IV.

Page 130. VI. *The sky is just beyond the roof, . . .* Of this beautiful poem, composed in prison, Verlaine writes in his book Mes Prisons: "Above the wall before my window (I had a window . . .) I could see the topmost boughs of a tall poplar, swaying and trembling voluptuously in the air. At the same time there reached my ear from distant Brussels . . . the soft, murmuring sounds of a far off fête. And thereupon I made these verses, found in Sagesse."

Page 137. *Of Old (Prologue).* Evidently written in some hospital. White nights are sleepless nights.

Page 138. *Kaleidoscope.* An unintelligible jumble of words—a kaleidoscope, as the title implies. Written in Belgium during the poet's vagabond days with Arthur Rimbaud. The line

"And the women with copper bound close to their brows,"

refers to the use of a metal helmet, or casque, worn by women laborers in that country. Lepelletier says the poem was meant as a humorous composition. Lemaître calls it the work of a madman or a fool.

Page 166. *False Impression.* Written in the prison of the Petits-Carmes, Brussels, July, 1873.

Page 167. *Others.* Written in the prison of Petits-Carmes, Brussels, upon wrapping paper purloined from the cantine. The "others" were prisoners like himself with whom, once each morning, Verlaine was allowed to promenade in a small paved court, under the eye of a guard.

Page 168. *Reversibles.* As its title indicates, this poem may be read backward as well as in the regular order—the meaning (if any) is as clear one way as the other. The third and fourth lines in the second stanza refer to an arrangement of the chapel in the prison at Mons—the altar having been placed in a peculiarly shaped alcove. See Verlaine's Mes Prisons.

Page 172. *Explanation.* Poem referring to Arthur Rimbaud.

Page 175. *The Impenitent.* The last line in this poem is as follows:

Si nous sommes cet amiteux.

The word "amiteux" is argot. There is no equivalent in English.